■ Lifestyle / C1

Departures 2004: Bibot's lessons; Lino Severino, artist who soared

■ Business / B1

Ayala Ave. land, one of SSS' P14-B assets for sale

■ News / A3

Militants hit Palace plan to sell farmers' shares in SMC

■ Business / B3

New Year's Eve war of the fireworks: the Fort vs Ayala Ave.

■ News / A5

10 more foreigners fall in Davao drug raid

GMA to attend Asean int'l aid summit in Indonesia

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo will attend the special meeting of leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations called to mobilize international support for the countries devastated by the tsunami, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye announced yesterday.

GMA/ A14

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Estrada stands 2 inches taller with replaced knees

By Armand N. Nocum

OK NA TINDIG, TUMANGKAD PA!

HONG KONG—Ousted President Estrada will be standing straight, more or less, and taller—two inches over his 5'8" frame—starting today or

ESTRADA/ A14

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Monday, January 3, 2005 ★★ 36 pages / 3 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 26 P18
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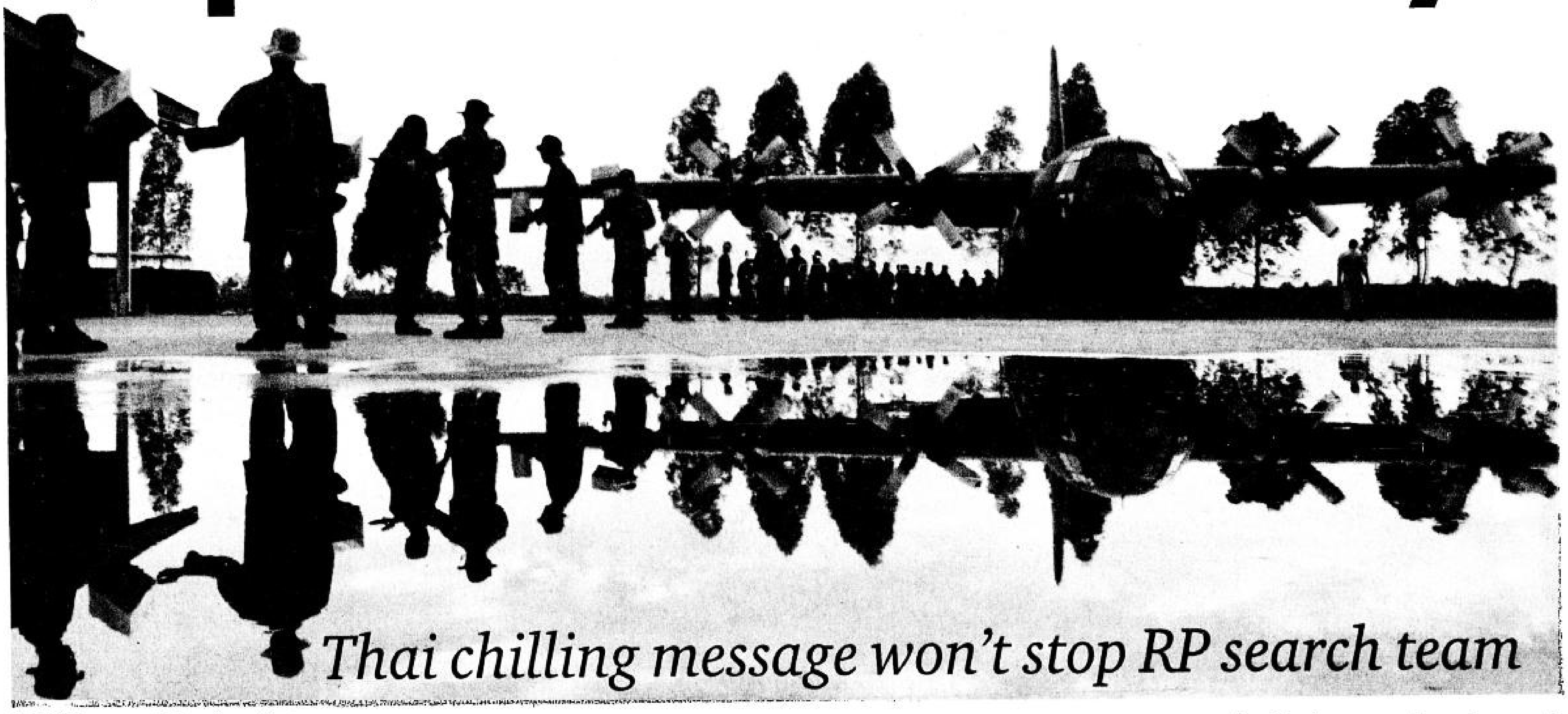
Hopes dim for 22 Pinoys



Thai chilling message won't stop RP search team

DOUBLE exposure: Indonesian soldiers in relay formation help unload relief supplies from a C-130 cargo plane on Saturday at the airport in Banda Aceh in Sumatra, Indonesia, which accounted for the most number of deaths from the earthquake-triggered tsunamis that swamped 11 countries from South Asia to Africa on Dec. 26. BULLIT MARQUEZ/AP

By TJ Burgonio

MORE than 6,000 people—22 of them Filipinos—still missing a week after tsunamis swallowed coastlines in southern Thailand are presumed dead.

This was the chilling message the Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday said it had received from the Thai Ministry of Interior in the wake of one of the world's worst-ever catastrophes, which killed possibly up to 150,000 people from some 40 countries.

If the deaths are confirmed, it would bring to 27 the total number of Filipinos killed in the disaster. Thirty-five others survived.

The grim news coincided with an announcement from Malacañang that "all missing persons are presumed dead."

"That's according to Thai authorities. That's not according to Filipino officials," DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque said in a phone interview.

Asuque said Thai interior ministry officials briefed the diplomatic corps on Phuket island Saturday on rescue and recovery operations and that Philippine Ambassador to Bangkok Antonio V. Rodriguez was present at the meeting.

Despite the Thai declaration, Asuque said a Philippine team led by Rodriguez remained on Phuket to continue the

HOPES/ A14

'God never abandons us'

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II sought to comfort the victims of the Asian tsunami disaster saying Sunday that God had not abandoned them in their hour of need.

"Faith teaches us that even during the most difficult and painful of tests, such as the calamities which hit Southeast Asia in the past days, God will never abandon us," the Pope told a large crowd who had gathered for the weekly Angelus. *AFP*

RP to benefit as tourism alternative

By Jerome Aning

THOUGH tourism officials are reluctant to say so, the Philippines is apparently benefiting from the killer tsunamis that laid to waste the famed tourist playgrounds of Thailand and South Asia last week.

According to the tourism department, some of the country's upmarket resorts in Palawan and the Visayas have been receiving inquiries from foreigners wishing to avoid the tsunami-stricken Asian destinations.

Leona Nepomuceno, chief of the DOT's Office of Tourism Information, said the posh Amanpulo resort and the Cuyo island group in Palawan have firmed up bookings for this year from foreign tourists and overseas travel agencies.

Amanpulo, an 89-hectare private island, has hosted such international

RP TO BENEFIT/ A9

'How can you tell a mother to give up hope?'

COLOMBO—The color picture of a smiling boy, clutching a doll, could be an icon of the human tragedy.

One week after tsunamis engulfed Sri Lanka's coastlines—sweeping away thousands of children with them—anguished parents of the missing are refusing to give up hope.

The waves killed more than 29,700 people across the nation, with children accounting for a third of the death toll.

One family took out a newspaper advertisement asking help to track down 5-year-old Nikhil Lissenburgh, last seen at the southern tourist resort of Yala when the tsunami struck.

"He may be dazed and confused and unable to express himself," pleads the advertisement.

The boy's color photograph gave the advertisement a touching human face.

"How can you tell a parent to give up hope?" said police officer Chandana Wickremaratne. "Most of the bodies at the morgue are those of small children."

Pictures of a Swedish mother dashing into tsunami waves on a Thai beach to save her children inspired faith in the human spirit when facing disaster.

Her identity and her family's fate remained unknown until this weekend when the mother, Karin Svaerd, 37, came forward to say they had all survived.

"She has become the whole world's heroine," said tabloid Expressen in a headline.

HOW CAN/ A9

Stories that captivated Fil-Ams in '04

By Percy D. Della
Correspondent

SACRAMENTO, California—The drama of a medical procedure to separate young twins joined at the head. The weight of an immigration backlog that effectively stopped the flow of nurses from the home country. The thrill of two heroic performances by *kababayans* in sports. These were among the major news stories that captivated Filipinos in the United States in 2004.

Here are those top news developments, not listed in chronological order:

"Young twins, formerly conjoined, begin plastic surgery after successful operation to separate them"

Twins Carl and Clarence Aguirre, once conjoined at the head, will undergo the first of many surgeries this year to start reconstruction of their skulls. The 2 1/2-year-old twins from Silay City, Negros Occidental, were separated in August following a 19-hour procedure considered a medical miracle by doctors at New York's Montefiore Medical Center.

David Staffenberg, their plastic surgeon, plans skin grafts from the

STORIES/ A4

GMA message insensitive to Asian disaster

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

AS THE nation entered the New Year, the second Arroyo administration wearily walked out of 2004 with a patchy record of underperformance during its first six months in office.

In a New Year's message, President Macapagal-Arroyo described 2005 as a "year of urgent change." She acknowledged that Filipinos were "impatient" for change. "I know that people can't wait," she said. "I'm impatient, too, for the urgent change to be made."

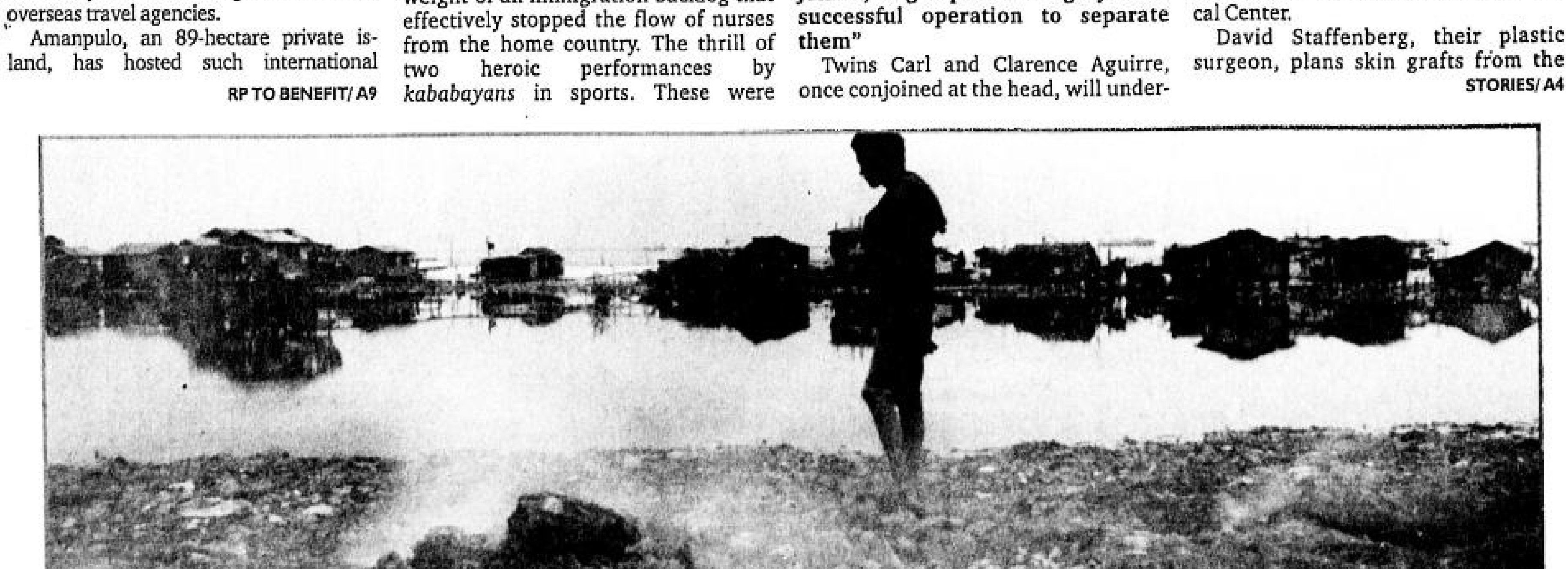
How long the Filipinos can remain patient without change is the most important point raised by the message.

Her call, "We must act … as one nation," is sheer platitude.

Speaking at a press conference on Dec. 30 in Nueva Vizcaya, the President summed up 2004 as a "year of triumph," marked by her election to a full six-year term and "tragedy" clouded by the death of several hundred Filipinos in a wave of typhoons and flooding in December.

The disasters in Quezon province were the precursors of a global natural catastrophe that was soon to erupt—the Dec. 26 tsunami, churned up by an Intensity 9 earthquake in the Indian

GMA MESSAGE/ A14



THE LONGEST NIGHT OF A NEW DAY
The hopes are there but not much else for the endlessly impoverished residents of the Baseco compound in Tondo. RAFFY LERMA

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers or thunderstorms becoming frequent rains over eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: D.J. YAP, PDI RESEARCH/01/02/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONT PAGE

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Palace sees brighter prospects in 2005 for RP; sets wish list

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACAÑANG is trumpeting 2005 as a much better year for Filipinos.

But Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye can offer only a general statement to back up this optimism. He said President Macapagal-Arroyo was looking forward to an improvement in the economy and positive results from her program against graft and corruption, which is aimed at preventing the loss of billions of pesos from government coffers.

"This year 2005, in our belief, will be a better year for us," Bunye said in a radio interview.

Bunye said the pursuit of the President's 10-point program of government should result in more jobs to uplift the lives of the people, eradicate corruption and improve the economic environment for more investments.

But Malacañang's optimism was apparently based on the hoped-for approval of the eight new taxes aimed at raising an additional P80 billion in government revenues.

Ms Arroyo said in her New Year message that she needed the new taxes as well as the approval by Congress of the P907-billion national budget for this year to usher in the "urgent changes" that she said needed to happen this year.

BUNYE: Strong belief

AFABLE: Clear agenda

Naia 3 takeover

Presidential Adviser on Communications Silvestre Afable said the government's takeover of the controversial Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport is also a major factor that would "propel the country forward" this year.

"(The) opening of Naia 3 will serve as a symbol of our economic renaissance as we defeat corruption and bring our economic house in order,'" Afable said.

The government plans to open Naia 3 as a modern airport in six months.

Describing the past year as "extremely challenging" for the Arroyo administration, Afable said the President's "reform and change-driven" administration has started to bear fruit.

Afable said that after winning a full term in May last year, the President set a "clear agenda to fight poverty and turn the economy around."

But business and church leaders said they noticed little improvement, if at all, in the economy and the lives of the people. A survey by the Social Weather Stations in the last months of 2004 showed the President's performance rating had further fallen because of the people's widespread dissatisfaction in her handling of the economy, the fight against corruption and the delivery of basic services.

Afable, however, brushed off the pessimistic outlook on the President's leadership and achievements.

"When a leader takes bold steps to change the national landscape, there is bound to be resistance, frustration and disenchantment, but these will pass," Afable said in a statement wherein he listed the "gains" of the Arroyo administration in 2004.

Afable said the President wielded "strong leadership in 2004 at the expense of her own popularity in order to commit the nation to a long-term vision of stability and growth."

. . . But Pimentel expects more hard times ahead

By Christine O. Avendaño

SENATE Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. has a different expectation of what the New Year holds for Filipinos.

For Pimentel, difficult times are ahead for the people given the continued rise in the prices of commodities and services.

Pimentel said that, right now, people are reeling from high electricity and water rates and high prices of food and transportation.

He noted that water rates are expected to rise even more in Metro Manila this month.

With all of these, Pimentel said wages for both government and private sector workers are expected to remain unchanged.

"So I can't imagine how the life of ordinary Filipinos can improve under the prevailing bleak conditions," Pimentel said in a statement. "In fact, we see more and more of our countrymen living a hand-to-mouth existence."

He said the opposition welcomed President Macapagal-Arroyo's pledge to fast-track reforms this year.

But he said the opposition remains skeptical on this new bid, given that the President had not yet made good her earlier pledge to stem corruption in government and criminality.

Pimentel, nevertheless, gave the assurance that the opposition would not get involved in destabilization attempts against the Arroyo administration.

But he warned that it would be the ordinary people who will rise if the economy continues to deteriorate.

"When more and more of our people are getting hungry and helpless, that is what our political leaders should worry about," Pimentel said. "The threat of destabilization will come from these desperate people, not from the legitimate opposition."

Standby fund for relief work proposed

By Cynthia D. Balana

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia has proposed the creation of a standby global antidisaster fund for rescue, relief and reconstruction work in the wake of the Asian tsunamis that have killed over 120,000 people.

De Venecia said on Saturday that he would file a House resolution which, once approved in the plenary, would be transmitted to the United Nations General Assembly for endorsement.

He said the magnitude of the tsunami tragedy that struck at least seven countries in South and Southeast Asia on Dec. 26 raised the need for a standby fund which could be used for immediate rescue and relief operations in case of disasters.

For the tsunami tragedy, several countries have donated over $2 billion for the victims.

Fund administrator

Either the UN, the World Bank or regional bodies like the Asian Development Fund could administer the fund for nations in the Pacific Rim, Southeast Asia, South Asia and even East Africa, he said.

"We leave it to the experts to determine whether to start with a fund of $1 billion or less," De Venecia said.

De Venecia said the fund could be gradually built up from international contributions and specific allocations in the national budget of participating countries.

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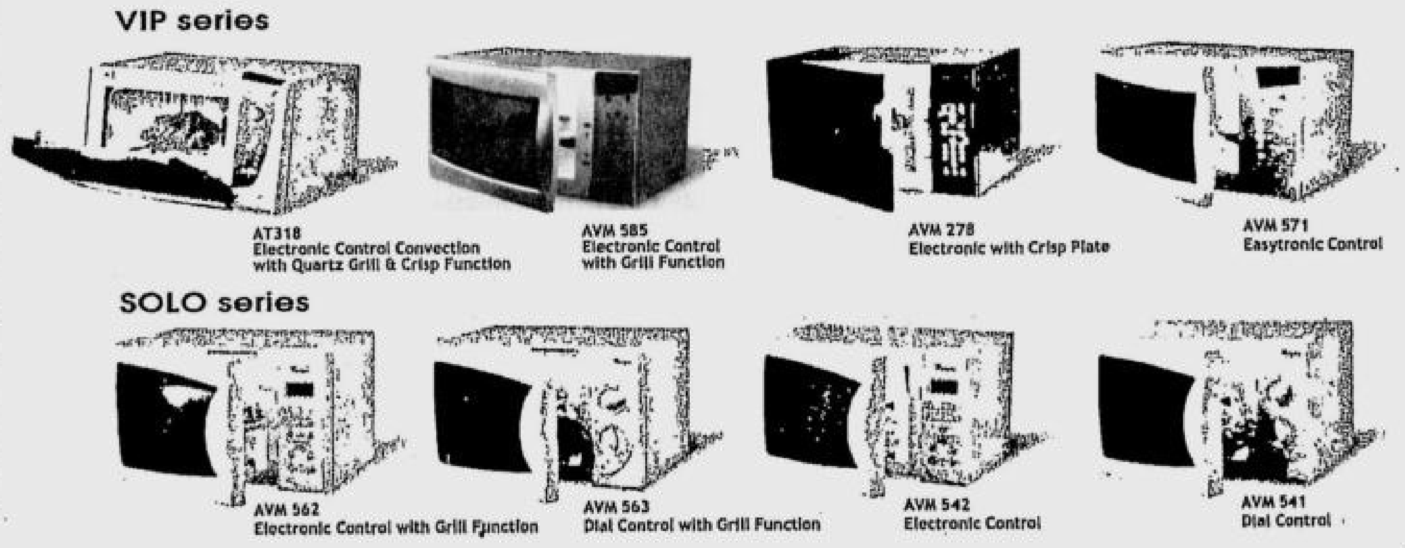
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Militants score plan to sell coco tillers' shares in SMC

By Norman Bordadora and Carlito Pablo

A MILITANT farmers' group yesterday criticized the government over its reported plan to sell the San Miguel Corp. and United Coconut Planters Bank shares that had been bought with coconut levy funds.

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas said the fund now estimated at P130 billion belonged to the coconut farmers who had fought to recover it.

"This is a most dastardly and treacherous act against the small coconut farmers who had fought long and hard to regain the coco levy funds. Now the first act of President Macapagal-Arroyo in the new year is to betray them," said Willy Marbella, KMP spokesperson.

Marbella said the administration's purported plan to sell the coco levy shares to generate much-needed funds for the government revealed Ms Arroyo's intent to control the fund.

"No wonder most of the rulings [were] somewhat in favor of the small farmers but what [the President was] planning all along [was] to amass the more than P130-billion coco levy fund for herself, on the pretext that it would be used for the ailing economy," Marbella said.

Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano, himself a former KMP leader, said the coco levy fund should be returned to the coconut farmers instead of being used for agrarian reform purposes as proposed by some quarters.

He has proposed a bill creating a trust fund for the benefit of the small coconut farmers and the rehabilitation of the coconut industry.

In the still unnumbered bill, Mariano called for the establishment of a "Genuine Small Coconut Farmers' Fund for the Rehabilitation and Development of the Coconut Industry."

"The GSCFFRDCI shall not be a part of the general fund of the national government and shall be used exclusively for the rehabilitation and development of the coconut industry and the uplift of the lives of those dependent on it," Mariano said.

Last December, the Sandiganbayan affirmed its earlier ruling granting the government control over the 27-percent in SMC shares worth at least P55 billion.

The antigraft court also affirmed its decision granting the government control over 72.2 percent of UCPB also in the name of the small coco farmers.

The Supreme Court had earlier ruled that the coconut levy funds were public funds.

Under the Mariano bill, the UCPB shall remain the financing and investment arm of the coconut industry "in order to secure reasonable returns for such portions of the funds capitalized for investment ventures..."

In Lucena City, a coconut farmer-leader asked Malacañang to utilize the 27-percent bloc of shares in SMC for the rehabilitation of calamity-stricken areas in northern Quezon instead of selling it to raise funds for the cash-short government.

Claro Talaga, also a former Quezon board member, said the coco levy fund belonged entirely to the coconut farmers.

"There are no 'ifs' and 'buts' about that. But once it is disposed of by the government, we're afraid the entire proceeds will be siphoned back to the national treasury with the millions of coconut farmers holding the empty bag," Talaga said.

On Saturday, Malacañang hinted at a plan to sell the 27-percent interest in SMC to help the government wriggle out of the financial crisis. *With Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Kiko: Special session won't see bills passed

By Christine O. Avendaño

SENATE Majority Leader Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan yesterday said he did not expect Congress to approve any tax measures during the three-day special session called by Malacañang on Jan. 5-7.

But Pangilinan said the three extra session days would still be beneficial to the senators as this would "give us the momentum to hit the ground running."

"(The extra session days) would also give us leeway before we tackle the budget bill," said Pangilinan in a phone interview.

Malacañang called for the special session in order to get at least one more tax measure of the eight proposed by President Macapagal-Arroyo passed. Only the increased excise tax on alcohol and tobacco products has been passed by both houses of Congress.

The Palace is pushing for the approval of all the eight tax measures in order to generate P80 billion in revenues for the government.

Pangilinan said the special session at most would see senators putting the finishing touches to two more tax measures.

These are the Lateral Attrition Act and the proposal to limit exemptions from the Value-Added Tax which is also being proposed to be increased from 10 to 12 percent.

The Senate majority leader said he expects senators to be able to complete floor deliberations on the lateral attrition bill which would give special incentives to government officials and personnel to perform well or retire early.

"The lateral attrition bill might be passed the week after (the special session) at the earliest," Pangilinan said.

Christians assure GMA of support

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE COUNTRY'S Christian bloc, representing 20,000 churches nationwide, has assured President Macapagal-Arroyo of its support and affirmed its faith in the government.

The Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), a group often wooed by politicians for support, urged Filipinos to back the government's efforts at unity following the tragedies that marked the past year.

In his New Year message, PCEC national director Bishop Efraim Tendero said Filipinos should move into 2005 with faith in what God can do for the nation through individuals and the government.

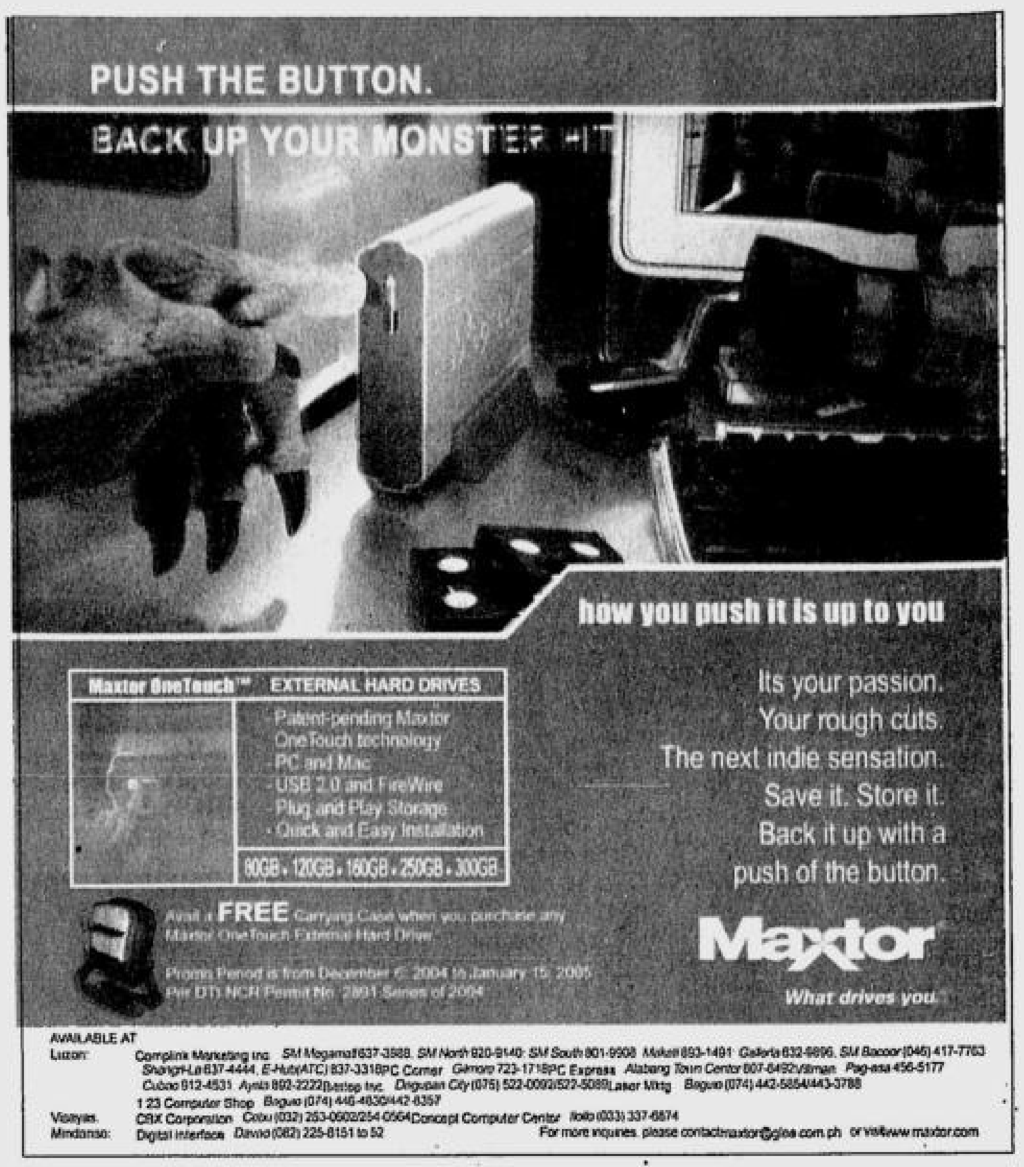
"Let us labor together towards uniting the Filipino people. Upholding our *bayanihan* spirit and our faith in the Almighty God, let us work hand in hand with everyone in rebuilding our nation. Let us continue to support President Macapagal-Arroyo as she leads our country," Tendero said.

He said 2004 was a crucial time for the country because of the "alarming degree of disunity brought about by one of the most bitterly contested presidential elections."

Aside from the political disunity, Tendero recalled the fiscal crisis and super typhoons that hit the Philippines last year.

"As we face yet another year of uncertainty and continue to feel the brunt of last year's devastations, it is easy for us to get overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness and to lose our sense of destiny," Tendero said.

"It is thus necessary that we focus on God and on what He can do in our individual lives and in our life as a nation. We can have hope and be bearers of hope," he said.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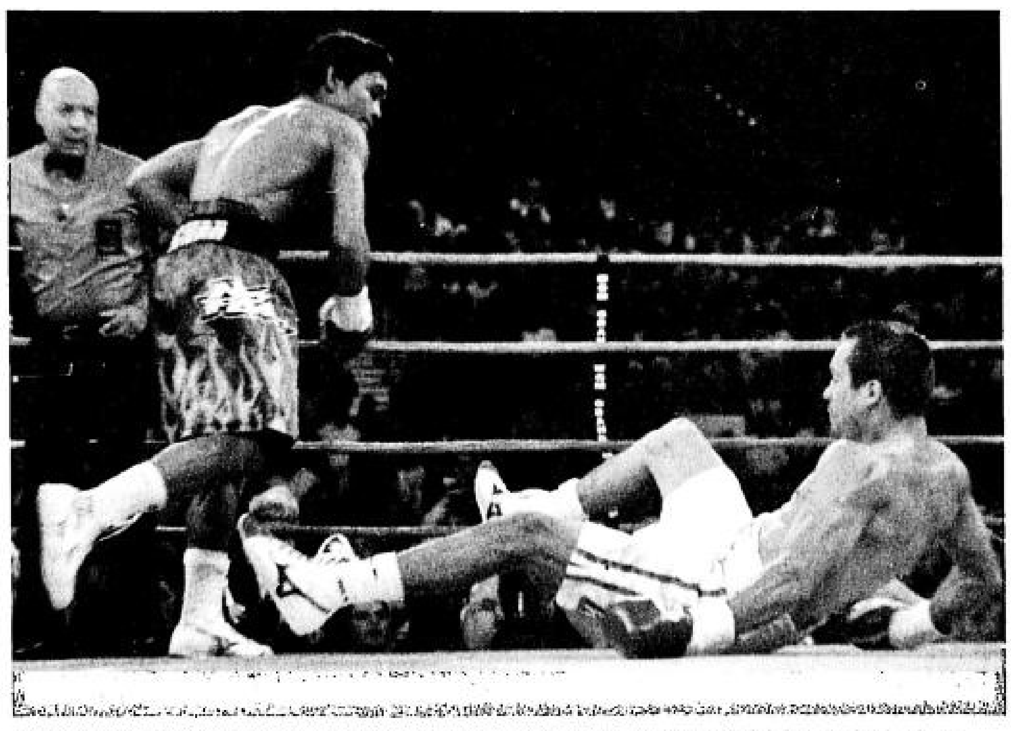
Stories that captivated Fil-Ams in 2004

JENNIFER ROSALES: Followed her $240,000 win in the championship in Chick-fil A Charity in Stockbridge, Georgia, with a 4th place finish at the US Ladies Open, which she led for 3 rounds. AP



DECKED by Manny Pacquiao's powerful punches three times in the initial round, Mexican fighter Juan Marquez still scored a draw. REUTERS

AP

NO MORE shortcuts for Filipino nurses to work in US hospitals. Fortunately, the recent free trade agreement between the Philippines and Japan opens up the latter's labor market to our local Florence Nightingales.

THE AGUIRRE twins, Carl and Clarence: Their incredible story of sacrifice, love and healing warms the heart of the Big Apple. PDI PHOTO

From page A1

twins' legs and will place these on their bald spots. As the boys continue to heal—their incredible story has become the staple of news in the Big Apple. The twins' will to live and the undying love and physical sacrifice of their mom Arlene—have become the source of inspiration for New Yorkers.

"Filipinos score big politically in Hawaii, zero in California, yet again"

Hawaii's 230,000 Filipinos—in a show of political force—helped elect eight of their own to the State Legislature in Honolulu in November. The winning Filipino-American candidates were led by incumbent Senate President Robert Bunda and fellow Sen. Ron Menor, both touted as potential candidates for governor. Bunda and Menor are sons of immigrants from Ilocos Norte.

In California, Filipinos scored a big, fat zero politically yet again. It was a big downer for a community that can trace its history in the Golden State to 1587, when the first "Luzon Indians" set foot in Morro Bay on the Central Coast.

No one among a million or so Filipinos in the state ran for the legislature this year.

In contrast, the Vietnamese now have their first ever assemblyman in Van Tranh, a Republican lawyer from Garden Grove near Disneyland. Tranh's victory bodes well for the Vietnamese who immigrated to Orange County only after the fall of their country to the communists in 1975.

"US immigration officials block fast-track US work permits for Philippine nurses"

Beginning this year, immigration officials will block a shortcut that allowed thousands of foreign nurses, predominantly from the Philippines, to get US work permits fast. Until further notice, the government will not process applications filed after January 2002. What had been a 60-day wait could now take up to three years or more, a Department of State bulletin announced in early December.

An Associated Press report said the new quota limit was actually the indirect result of a more efficient immigration process. After Sept. 11, 2001, the system became backlogged due to updated security measures. Nurses from the Philippines got by on temporary work permits as they waited for their number to come up for a green card."

The change could leave hospitals across the US with a more serious shortage of roughly 275,000 nurses by 2010. It basically cut off the supply of medical staff provided by the Philippines, the major source of imported nurses for the United States.

"Fil-Am general authors Iraqi prison report that proves embarrassing to powers that be"

In June, Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, the second general of Filipino ancestry in the US Army, told the Senate intelligence committee that he believes there was no policy, no order given to military police to commit abuses at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib military prison. Under the glare of TV lights, Taguba told senators a failure of leadership was to blame for the situation. Taguba authored the investigative report in May about abuses of Iraqis at the prison at the hands of American soldiers. His report has brought embarrassment to the Pentagon and the White House.

Taguba came to Hawaii with his parents from the Philippines when he was 2 years old.

"CalPERs changes mind, keeps investments in the Philippines"

In a rare show of unity, Filipinos by the busload and led by Philippine Ambassador to the US Alberto del Rosario convinced the nation's largest pension fund not to pull its investments out of the Philippines.

In a meeting in downtown Sacramento in April, the investment committee of the California Public Employees' Retirement System decided to keep its $67-million investment in the country. CalPERs invests $2.6 billion in international equity markets in emerging economies across the globe.

These investments have the promise of handsome payoffs. But they can also carry great peril. Had the Philippines been taken off CalPERs' list, the Philippines would have been viewed as a risky and unattractive investment location.

"Arroyo conferred doctorate at Jesuit school on way to mend fences with George Dubya"

Amid pomp, pageantry and tight security, President Macapagal-Arroyo received an honorary doctorate from the Jesuit-run University of San Francisco in late November. Ms Arroyo sought to mend fences with Washington with a speech stressing that Philippine-American ties remain robust despite a strain caused by the hasty pullout of Philippine troops from the US-led coalition in Iraq.

Ms Arroyo stopped over in the Bay Area en route the Apec (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit in Chile, where President Bush and leaders of Asian Pacific nations attended. The tight security arrangements for Macapagal's brief appearance at the downtown USF campus created a ruckus in the community. Activist students and teachers were allegedly barred from attending the conferment ceremonies.

"Bestseller with a Philippine connection debuts as a movie"

With Oscar winner Jon Voight in the lead role of Eddie, Mitch Albom's "'The Five People You Meet in Heaven" aired as an ABC network television movie in November.

Albom's book, a New York Times bestseller, tells the story of an aging carnival worker who dies and discovers through five people he meets in the next world that contrary to his belief, he has had a useful life.

A prime time national audience on a Sunday night learned that the last of Albom's "Five People" is a girl named Tala (Star) who Eddie had tried but failed to save as a soldier in the Philippines in World War II.

"Pacquiao settles for a draw; Rosales wins on LPGA tour"

Two young and flamboyant Filipino superstars performed on the center stage of sports in the summer of 2004—to the adulation of Fil-Ams and compatriots the world over.

Jennifer Rosales, known to US golf followers for her fashion statements and trademark sunglasses, finally won a leg of the lucrative LPGA tour. She followed her $240,000 win in the Chick-fil-A Charity championship in Stockbridge, Georgia, in May with a fourth place finish in July at the US Ladies Open she had led for three rounds. She closed out 2004 with a 10th place finish among the LPGA's money leaders.

Also in May, Manny Pacquiao fought Juan Manuel Marquez for the unified IBF and WBA featherweight title at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.

Although decked by Pacquiao's powerful punches three times in the initial round, the Mexican fighter coasted and scored enough punches for a draw.

"Atong Ang ordered extradited by US district judge"

Charlie "Atong" Ang had committed the crime of plunder, a United States district judge ruled and ordered that the co-accused of jailed former President Joseph Estrada be extradited to the Philippines.

Judge Lawrence R. Leavitt of the US District Court of Nevada issued the ruling in October, basing it on the testimony of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, which he found to be "reliable and admissible in extradition hearings as statements against penal interest."

He said Singson's testimony clearly placed Ang "in the middle of the transaction" and that he had "participated" in Estrada's alleged diversion of P130 million in tax money for the latter's personal use in August 1998.

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Credit downgrade no big deal–economist

By Carlito Pablo

WHAT'S there to worry about a credit downgrade?

Not much, actually, according to economist Rodolfo Vicerra, secretary general of the House of Representatives' think-tank Congressional Planning and Budget Department.

Vicerra, in a memorandum addressed to all members of the House, said that while the prospect of a downgrade has caused much concern in policy circles, "our opinion, however, is that the financial markets have already priced (factored in) the expected downgrade."

"A credit downgrade does not really mean that international financial taps will close," Vicerra said. "As long as the country has the ability to service its foreign obligations, the prospect of a financial crisis is still far off."

Malacañang has called a special session from Jan. 5 to 7 to pass tax measures to avert a possible credit downgrade.

Vicerra noted that even before the official pronouncement of a "fiscal crisis" last year, interest cost on newly issued Philippine bonds already went up a few percentages above the US Treasury Bill. "It has pretty much stayed at this level since then," he said.

Vicerra explained that "at worst, we think that an actual downgrade may lead only to another 10 to 20 basis points beyond 490 above US T-Bills."

"Such additional 10 to 20 basis points, thus, could possibly translate to P517 million-P1.034 billion in additional interest costs to the economy," Vicerra said.

"On the part of the government, accessing more low-cost financial help from official development assistance (ODA) may help reduce or offset this," Vicerra said.

"From the point of view of the national budget, such incremental costs arising from a credit downgrade is actually miniscule," he added.

But Vicerra conceded that a credit downgrade will make it longer for the country to realize a credit upgrade.

10 more foreigners nabbed in Davao drugs crackdown

By Christian V. Esguerra

TEN MORE foreigners have been arrested in Davao City in a followup operation to the New Year's Eve raid of an upstart shabu laboratory there.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the police Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force nabbed the suspects at a three-door apartment in Barangay Obrero at around 11 a.m. Saturday.

Three other Filipinos were also arrested during this operation, authorities said.

They withheld the identities of the suspects, however, pending the determination of the foreigners' nationality.

Deputy Director General Ricardo de Leon, AIDSOTF chief, said the place had been under surveillance for months. It allegedly housed members of the big-time drug syndicate running the shabu laboratory in Toril district.

A team of police and government agents raided the shabu laboratory on New Year's Eve and killed six "Oriental-looking" men during a brief shootout.

They also seized some P152 million worth of processed shabu.

The Bureau of Immigration is set to make public this morning the identities and nationality of the six slain suspects.

Philippine National Police chief Edgar Aglipay identified one of the Filipinos arrested in Barangay Obrero as Jed Sy, wife of gang leader Allan Sy under whose name the Davao laboratory was listed.

Meanwhile, Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte has offered to personally bury the six suspects slain in the Toril laboratory raid.

Duterte said the bodies were still at the morgue of the Davao Sanitarium Hospital and have yet to be claimed.

The mayor said he can have the six foreigners placed in a plastic bag and bury them in a public cemetery.

"There will be no special treatment here. They were criminals. They have no place here in Davao City," he said during his weekly radio program "Ato ni Bay" yesterday morning.

There were reports that one of the slain suspects was a certain Alex Sy, an alleged Chinese national.

But Supt. Wilkins Villanueva, regional director of PDEA, refused to confirm that Sy was one of those killed, saying they were still conducting followup operations.

The shabu laboratory in Davao City was the fourth one the government raided in just two days.

Last Wednesday, antidrug and government agents dismantled three shabu laboratories in Bataan and Bulacan and seized some P13 billion worth of shabu, chemical ingredients and equipment. *With a report from Anthony S. Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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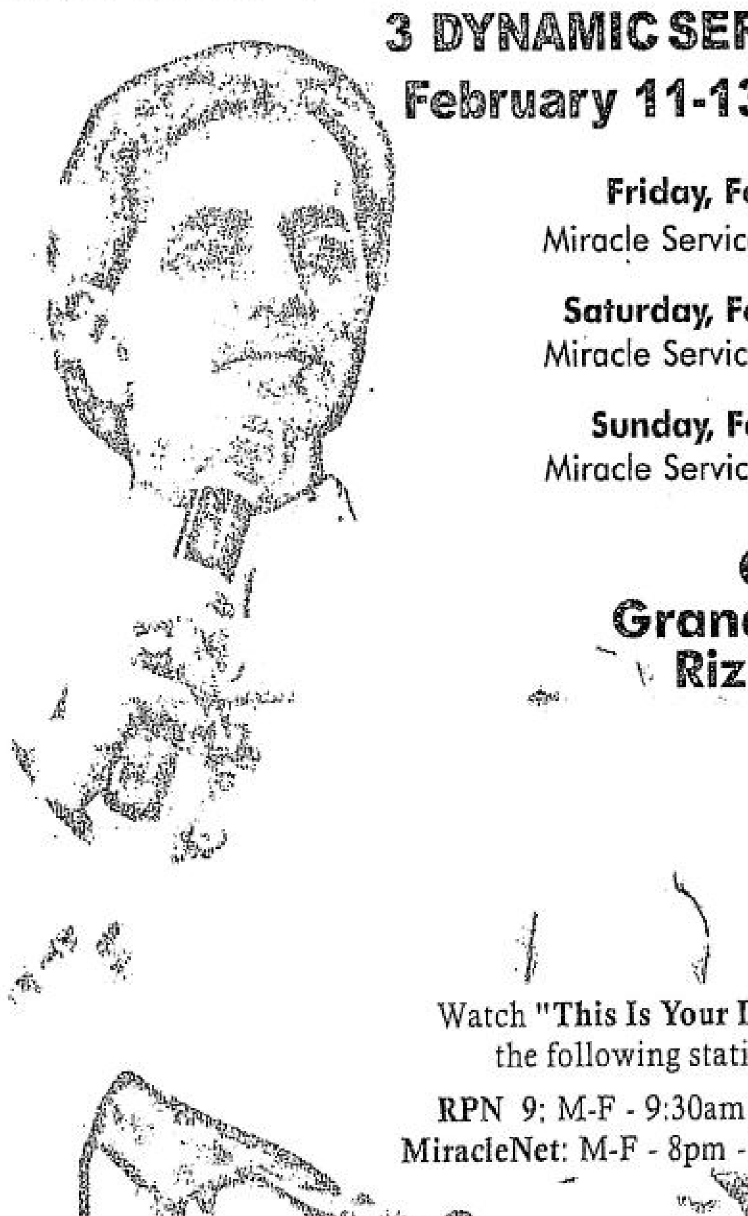

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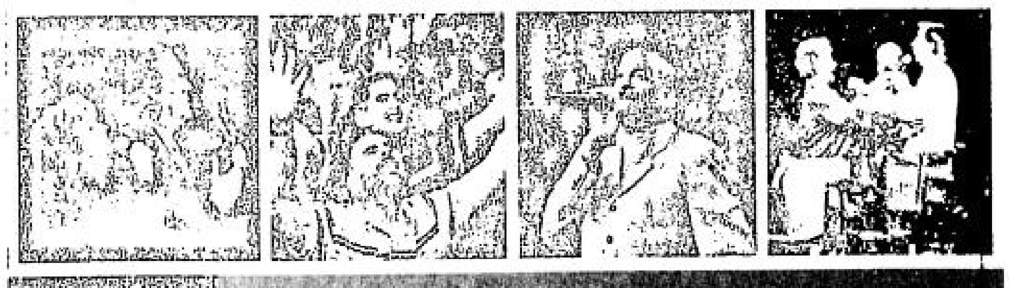

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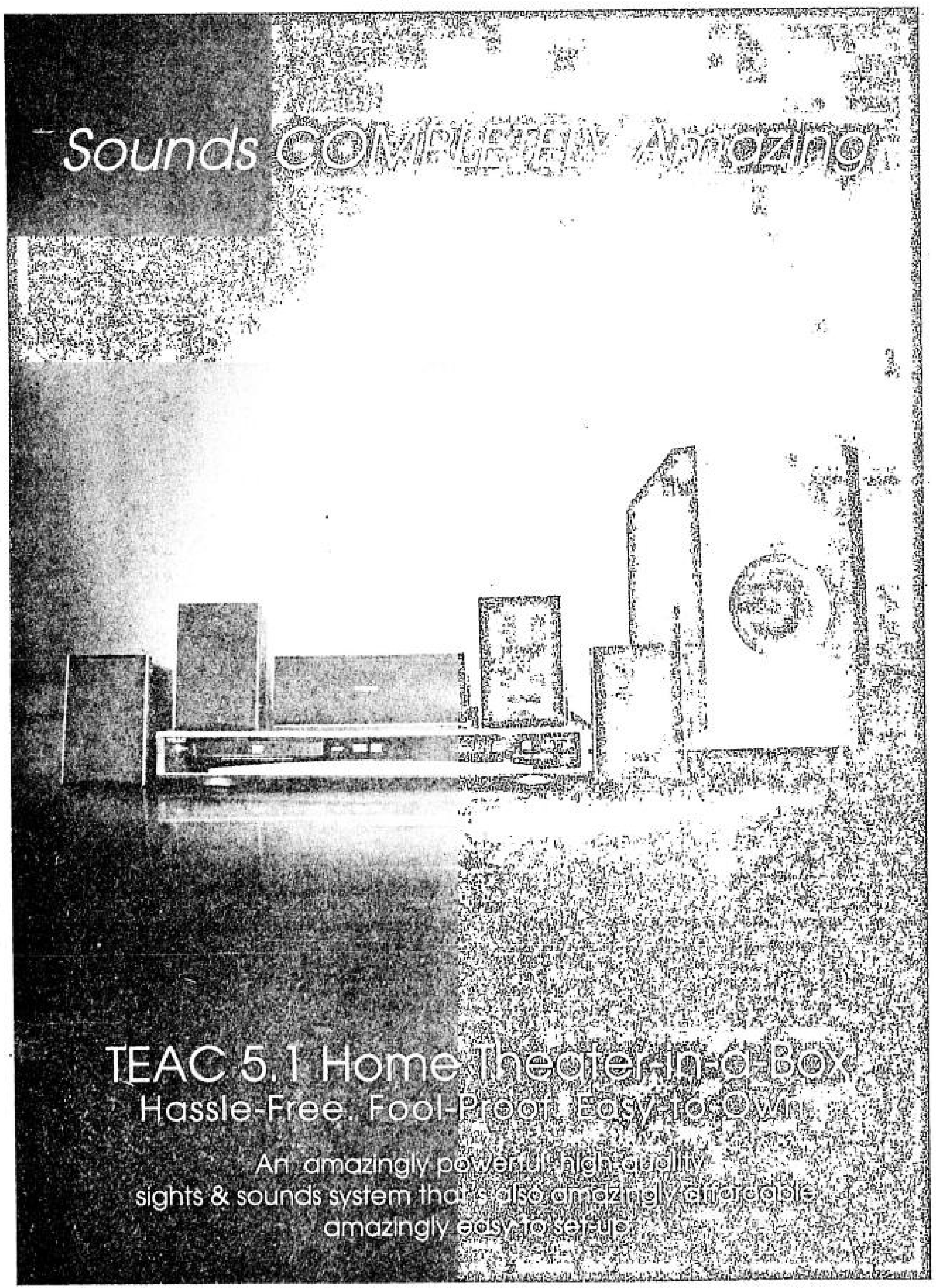
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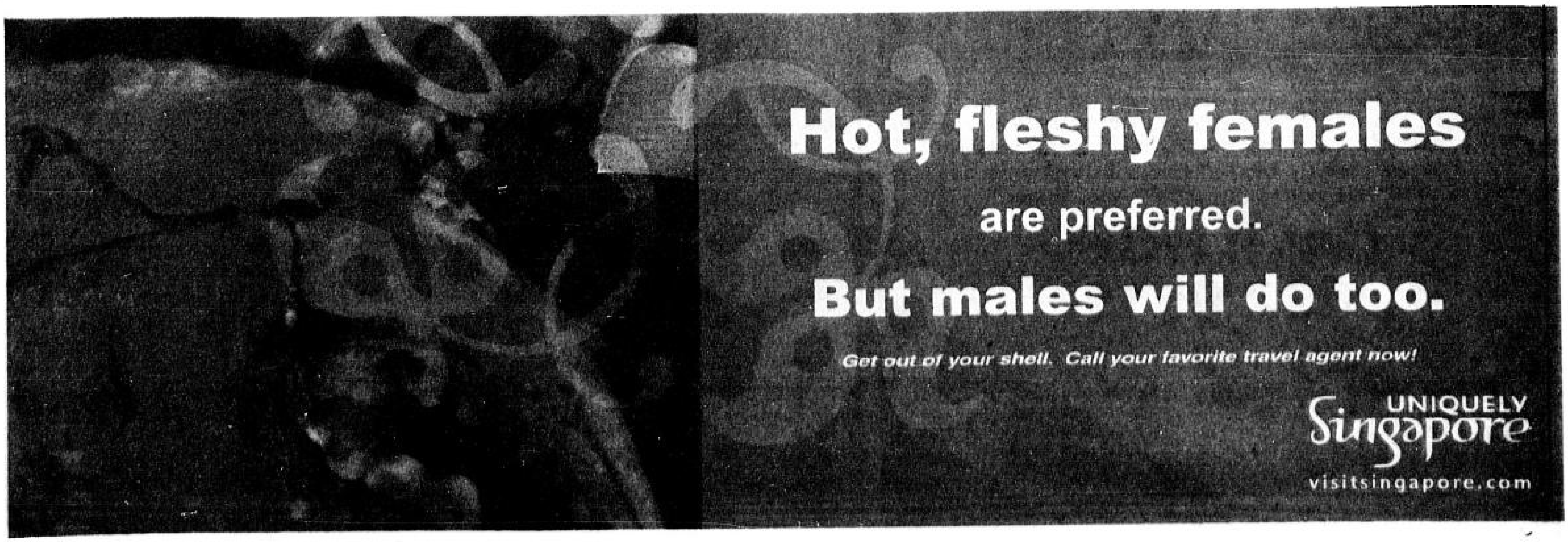
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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Bloodshed greets Iraq in new year

BAGHDAD—Iraqi insurgents made a bloody start to 2005 killing at least 14 people, including a US soldier and a Lebanese contractor, with promised nationwide elections less than a month away.

Two of the dead were beheaded by their killers, and one of the attacks, a drive-by shooting of a provincial official, was claimed by an affiliate of al-Qaida.

In a New Year's message broadcast on state television, interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi told Iraqis that 2005 promised to be decisive for their country's future.

"The new year will be decisive in the history of our nation and its future," said Allawi, who has staked his reputation on seeing through the elections despite repeated threats of sabotage from insurgents.

Nineteen people were also killed in a suicide car bomb attack against Iraqi national guards on Sunday as more US troops were sent to the restive city of Mosul to reinforce security ahead of landmark elections in four weeks.

A suicide car bomber rammed into a bus carrying national guards outside a US military base in Balad, north of the capital, killing at least 18 guards and a woman bystander, the US military said.

Six guardsmen were also wounded in the attack, another deadly blow in the relentless campaign by insurgents against the country's nascent security forces ahead of the nationwide legislative and provincial election on Jan. 30.

Meanwhile, provincial council leader Nawfal Abdel Hussein was killed along with his brother Fares outside his home in the restive town of Baquba, north of Baghdad, medics and witnesses said.

Police also discovered the body of another council member, veterinarian Ali Herdan, dumped on a roadside outside of town.

Militants loyal to al-Qaida's Iraq commander Abu Musab al-Zarqawi claimed Hussein's killing in a statement posted on an Islamist website.

The group also posted what appeared to be video footage of the executions of five Iraqi national guardsmen in the militant stronghold of Ramadi on Monday.

In the capital, police found two beheaded corpses in white bags dumped in the western Al-Khadra neighborhood.

Identity papers showed one of the men was employed by the US-led coalition, the interior ministry said.

In southeastern Baghdad, gunmen killed an Iraqi policeman outside his home, the ministry added.

And in the center, a Lebanese employee of a Kuwaiti contracting firm was killed and a colleague wounded inside the Green Zone, a heavily fortified compound that houses the Iraqi interim government and the US Embassy.

Mourners meanwhile buried an ambulance driver who was killed by a stray bullet in the Haifa Street neighborhood, an insurgent stronghold in central Baghdad, on Friday.

North of the capital, two national guardsmen were killed and six wounded in a mortar strike on their base in Isaki, 20 km south of the city of Samarra, a fellow officer told AFP. *AFP*

Most wanted militant among Riyadh suicide car bombers

RIYADH—One of Saudi Arabia's most wanted militants, Abdullah Saud al-Subaiei, was among three suicide bombers who attacked the interior ministry in Riyadh this week, the ministry said Saturday.

A ministry statement identified another suicide bomber as Mohammad Mohsen al-Osaimi and said authorities were still trying to establish the identity of the third who carried out a car bomb attack against the ministry on Wednesday.

The statement, cited by the official SPA news agency, also identified the two militants who carried out a simultaneous car bomb attack against a special forces base in the Saudi capital.

Subaiei was on a list of 26 top fugitives issued by Saudi authorities in December 2003.

The statement said he was involved in the attack on the Oasis housing compound in the eastern oil city of Al-Khobar on May 29, 2004, where "he mutilated the bodies of victims."

Four Westerners were among 22 people killed in the shooting and hostage-taking rampage in Al-Khobar, which was claimed by the al-Qaida terror network.

Subaiei "participated in preparing the (booby-trapped) car that was used in the attack on Al-Muhaya housing complex" in Riyadh in November 2003, which left 17 people dead, the statement added.

The other two militants who attacked the special security base were identified as Dakheel Abdul Aziz Dakheel Mohammad al-Obeid and Nasser Ali Saad al-Motairi.

The ministry said Obeid was among those who "kidnapped and killed a foreign resident"—an apparent reference to American aeronautics engineer Paul Johnson, who was abducted and beheaded last June by the so-called "al-Qaida in the Arabian peninsula."

The ministry said the remains of the five bombers were found at the sites of the two attacks. *AFP*

Renegade Peru troops seek president's ouster

LIMA—Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo on Sunday faced an ongoing armed rebellion by 150 army reservists, who took 10 officers at a provincial police station hostage and demanded that he resign.

The uprising, which began in southeastern Peru early Saturday, was backed by a retired Peruvian army commander currently in South Korea, who sent a message urging the Peruvian people to rise up against Toledo's government.

Toledo declared a regional state of emergency, allowing him to use soldiers as well as police against the hostage-takers, and dispatched additional security forces to the area of Andahuaylas, an agricultural area 400 km southeast of Lima.

Police said seven people were wounded in the hostage-taking—five officers and two presumed members of the ultranationalist rebel group, identified as the Etnocaceristas.

The leader of the uprising, retired Army Maj. Antauro Humala, said the group believes Toledo is a corrupt sellout to foreign investors, and demanded an end to inflows of capital from neighboring Chile, a traditional rival.

Humala is the brother of Ollanta Humala, an army commander the government retired three days ago. Ollanta Humala led an October 2000 military uprising a month before the collapse of ex-President Alberto Fujimori's government amid a corruption scandal.

"We are not going to leave the police station until Toledo steps down, but I also am willing to negotiate," said Antauro Humala. He said his brother was en route to Peru from South Korea to lead the movement.

In Seoul Saturday, Ollanta Humala issued a statement, cited on local radio here, calling on Peruvians to "rise up" against Toledo's government.

"It's the moment to rise up and to show the anti-patriot political class that the Peruvian people are capable of taking a virile attitude when wronged by a government that, day after day, loses its legitimacy and puts itself on the margin of legality," the statement said. *AFP*

ULTRA-NATIONALIST retired Army Maj. Antauro Humala (right) listens as one of his supporters dressed in a police uniform (left) speaks in a remote Andean town in Andahuaylas, 440 km south of Lima. AP

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US mulls lifetime detention for terror suspects

WASHINGTON—The Bush administration is preparing plans for possible lifetime detention of suspected terrorists, including hundreds whom the government does not have enough evidence to charge in courts, The Washington Post reported on Sunday.

Citing intelligence, defense and diplomatic officials, the newspaper said the Pentagon and the CIA had asked the White House to decide on a more permanent approach for those it would not set free or turn over to courts at home or abroad.

As part of a solution, the Defense Department, which holds 500 prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, plans to ask the US Congress for $25 million to build a 200-bed prison to hold detainees who are unlikely to ever go through a military tribunal for lack of evidence, defense officials told the newspaper.

The new prison, dubbed Camp 6, would allow inmates more comfort and freedom than they have now, and would be designed for prisoners the government believes have no more intelligence to share, The Post said.

"It would be modeled on a US prison and would allow socializing among inmates," the paper said.

"Since global war on terror is a long-term effort, it makes sense for us to be looking at solutions for long-term problems," Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesperson, was quoted as saying. "This has been evolutionary, but we are at a point in time where we have to say, 'How do you deal with them in the long term?'"

A Pentagon spokesperson, Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke of the Air Force, had no information on the reported plan.

The Post said the outcome of a review under way would also affect those expected to be captured in the course of future counterterrorism operations.

One proposal would transfer large numbers of Afghan, Saudi and Yemeni detainees from the US military's Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention center into new US-built prisons in their home countries, it said.

The prisons would be operated by those countries, but the State Department, where this idea originated, would ask them to abide by recognized human rights standards and would monitor compliance, a senior administration official was quoted as saying. *Reuters*

Argentina begins burying victims of disco fire

BUENOS AIRES—Argentina rang in the New Year on a grim note as families identified and began burying 177 victims of a fire in a Buenos Aires rock club, including children and babies who may have perished in a makeshift nursery in the bathroom.

New Years' celebrations were muted on Saturday as the government began handing over bodies to families with the order that they be buried, not cremated, due to the criminal investigation into one of Argentina's worst disasters.

The blaze during a concert on Thursday night started when concert-goers launched a flare that ignited foam on the ceiling. The fire sent some 4,000 mostly teenage fans scrambling for the exits amid falling debris and thick smoke.

Four of the six doors were locked, officials said.

The city's medical emergency service raised the death toll by three to 177 at nightfall on Saturday and said 726 people had been treated in hospitals, mostly for smoke inhalation.

Forty-five people were still in intensive care in public hospitals.

Police detained the owner of the Cromagnon Republic club on Friday and sought his three partners to question them about overcrowding, the use of flammable materials and locking the exit doors to stop people from entering without paying. The club had a permit for 1,100 spectators.

Officials are also looking into witness statements that the club had a nursery in the women's bathroom where parents could leave children while they attended the concert.

"How could they permit such a thing?" Marcelo Calderon asked as he waited outside the morgue for the bodies of his brother and nephew.

Police said witnesses' have also helped them identify three youths who might have launched the flare. It was not known if they were among the victims.

In addition to declaring three days of mourning, Mayor Anibal Ibarra announced on Saturday a ban on live music in clubs and the closure of all nightclubs for the next 15 days while officials consider safety measures. *Reuters*

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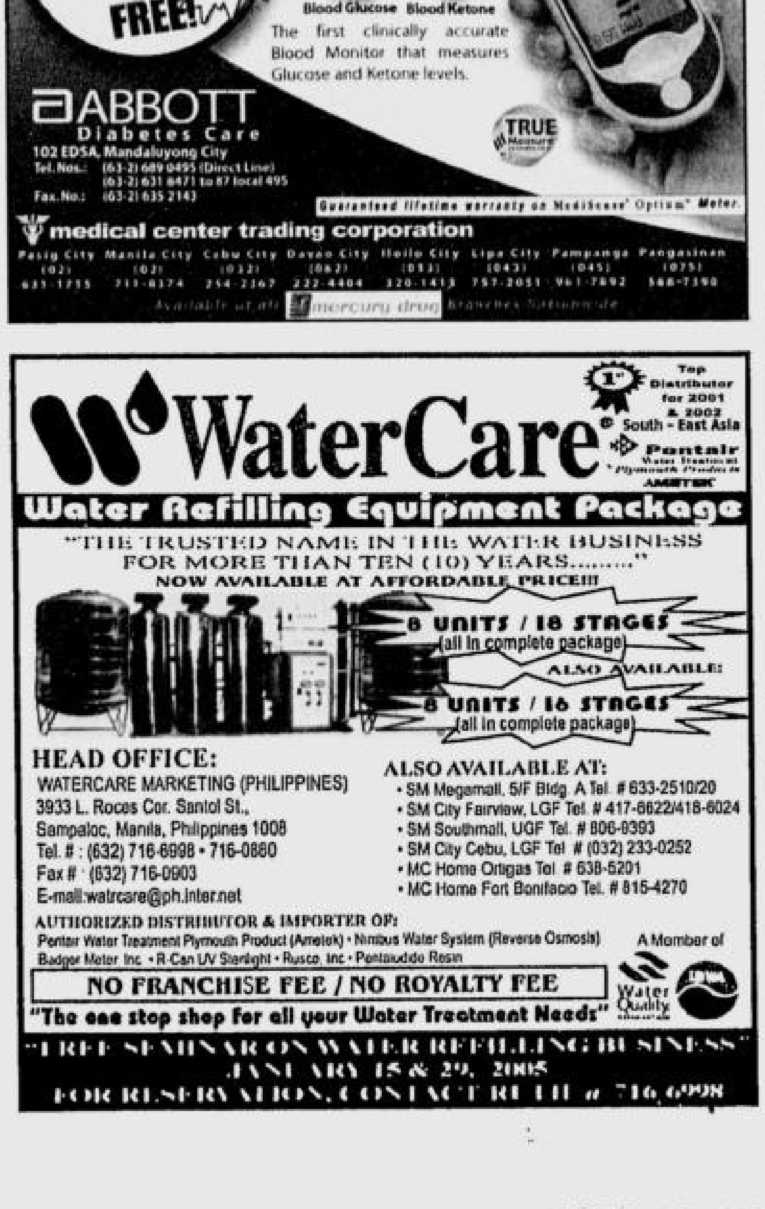
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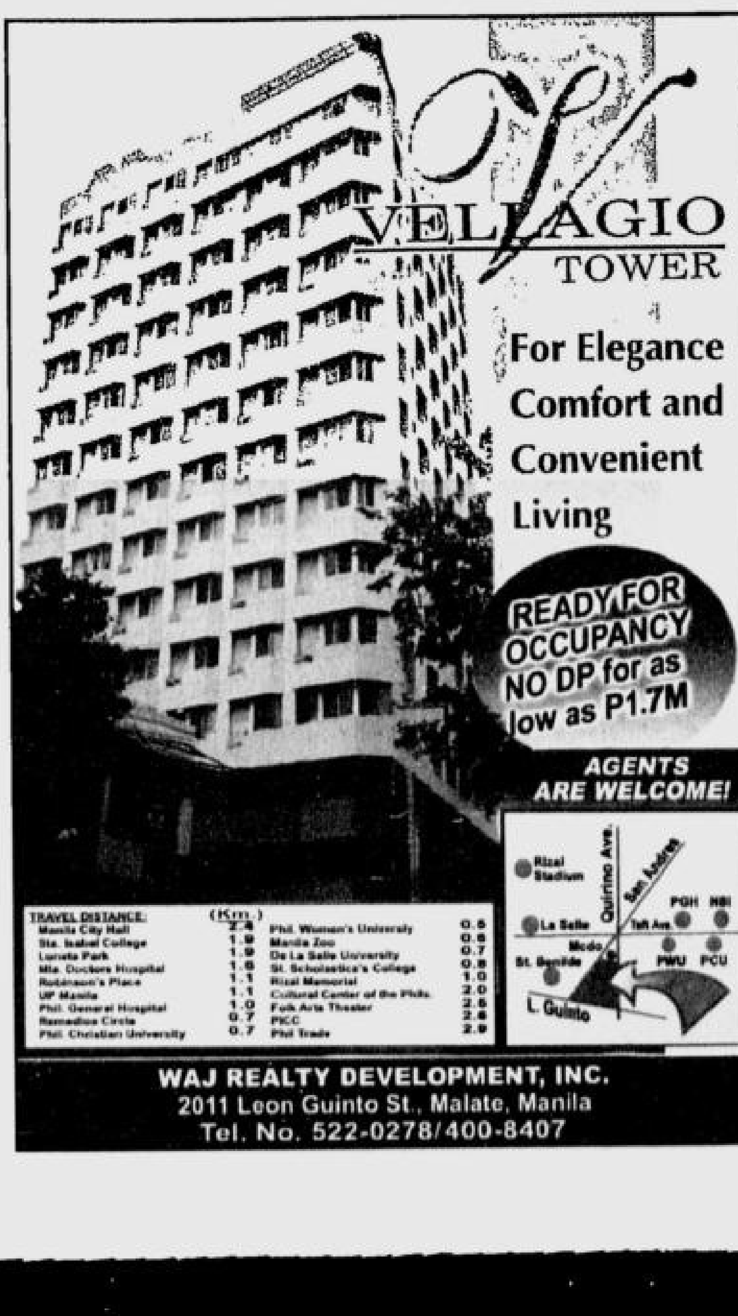
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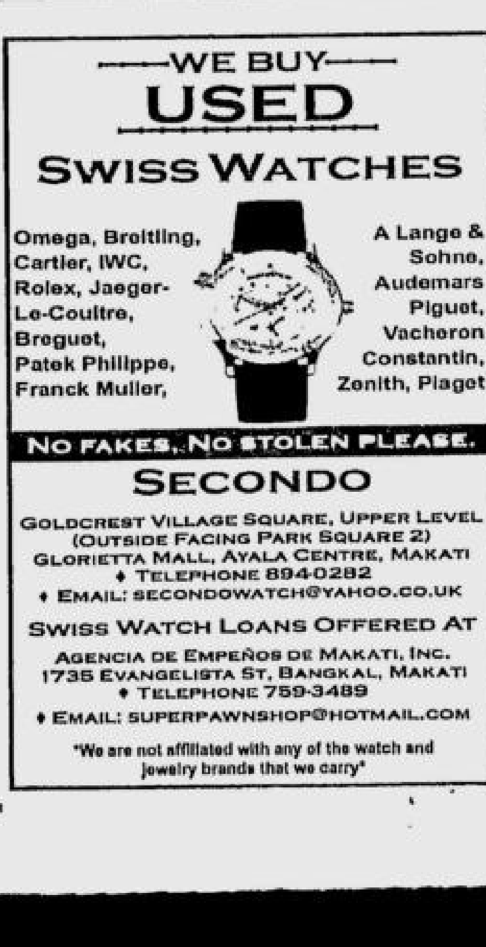
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Abbas gets hero's welcome in Gaza Strip

RAFAH, Gaza Strip—Gunmen hoisted Mahmoud Abbas on their shoulders as thousands of Palestinians gave the presidential election front-runner a hero's welcome on Saturday in a Gaza refugee camp shattered by fighting with Israel.

Abbas, running to succeed Yasser Arafat in a Jan. 9 vote, has branded violence a mistake but has wooed the late leader's militant loyalists by upholding his goal of total Israeli withdrawal from occupied lands where Palestinians seek a state.

Some among the 100 black-clad militants with assault rifles lifted Abbas, dressed in a sober business suit, on to their shoulders. Then they carried him through a swirling crowd of thousands who greeted him to the sprawling Rafah refugee camp.

They draped an Arafat-style keffiyeh (headdress) on Abbas and chanted in fealty, "With our blood and our souls we will redeem you, Abu Mazen," as they once did for Arafat. Large posters of Abbas and Arafat bedecked the camp.

A rally held in a wedding hall grew so frenzied, with the crowd surging chaotically, that Abbas, 69, had to scramble through a window to leave after delivering a campaign speech.

Abbas had almost canceled the trip because of an Israeli army raid into the Khan Younis refugee camp just north of Rafah that killed 12 Palestinians, mainly gunmen.

Militants in southern Gaza have been carrying out daily mortar bomb and rocket attacks against Jewish settlements Israel has slated for evacuation this year under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's "disengagement" plan.

Abbas later told reporters in Gaza City that Israeli incursions, which he called "escalations," interfered with the peace process as well as the Palestinian election campaign.

"This is hindering the election process but our people will not allow anyone to obstruct their democratic plans," he said.

A US-backed moderate, Abbas has urged Palestinians to embrace non-violence in the struggle for statehood, a stand criticized by the militant group Hamas, which is sworn to Israel's destruction and has vowed to boycott the elections.

In Rafah, Abbas told residents they would "not be defeated and not be humiliated." The camp, a militant stronghold and frequent scene of Israeli raids, has lost more lives than any other place in the four-year-old Middle East conflict.

Israeli raids to root out tunnels dug by Rafah militants to smuggle in arms from nearby Egypt have killed hundreds in the sprawling slum of 80,000 people, both gunmen and civilians.

UN refugee agency figures show around 16,000 residents have been made homeless from demolitions of housing, which is said by Israeli forces to have hidden tunnel outlets. *Reuters*

PALESTINIANS carry on their shoulders Palestinian presidential candidate Mahmoud Abbas during a Fatah election campaign rally in Rafah south of Gaza Strip Jan. 1. REUTERS

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‘How can you tell a mother to give up hope?’

From page A1

The series of Agence France-Presse pictures shows confused vacationers on Ray Leh Beach looking at the water receding prior to the tsunami. Another shot shows swimmers running in to shore.

But Svaerd was running out toward the wave, screaming, “Oh my god, not my children!” Her sons Anton, 14; Filip, 11, and Viktor, 10, did not see the wave.

“I was yelling at them to run, but they couldn’t hear me,” Svaerd told Expressen, describing her desperation as her three sons, brother and brother-in-law snorkelled in the water, unaware of the danger.

“I could hear people shouting at me ‘Get off the beach’—but I ignored them,” UK daily News of the World quoted Svaerd as saying. “I had to try and save my children, nothing was going to stop me.”

“I did not care. I was looking at my children,” she said.

The family was tossed around under water. But one by one they managed to get to their feet and make it to higher ground.

Touching quotes

Some of the most touching quotes from survivors:

Sri Lankan Pala Withanage: “Without my wife I don’t want to live. But because of my child, I will.”

Souvenir shop owner Dusit Dernchai, fingering a Buddhist amulet hanging from his neck: “I feel like I have been born again. I am not religious but I wear this gold Buddha around my neck and I also have a picture of the king and queen on my wall. Together these saved me ... I will stay here. This is my home and I will rebuild everything again.”

Italian grandmother Maria Boscani, a survivor: “We looked death in the face.”

Swede hunting for kin

PHUKET, Thailand—Coffins and corpses stacked up at temples. A T-shirt and a shoe among remnants strewn around a resort smashed to bits by the tsunami.

Stefan Hilton has seen it all.

Hilton, a Swede, traveled up and down the road winding through forested hills on a search for his Finnish aunt, uncle and two cousins, aged 19 and 20.

Hilton, who was in Germany when he heard the news about the waves, packed his bags and set off to hunt for his relatives. He arrived Thursday. There were 3,200 decomposing bodies at three temples province that day.

WOMEN quench their thirst from safe water packets while waiting in a queue for food rations at Nagappattinam in India’s Tamil Nadu. AP

“I threw up,” Hilton said. “I kept on looking, I threw up again.”

On Friday, he again hit the road, visiting two more temples and two refrigerated containers stacked with bodies.

“Walking around, you see one shoe, a pair of underwear, a T-shirt ... There’s nowhere to look anymore,” he said.

Hilton was heading back to Germany Sunday.

Outwitting the crocodiles

PORT BLAIR, India—For G. Balan, a gut-wrenching obstacle stood between his tsunami-devastated village and any hope of safety: A lagoon teeming with crocodiles.

Luckily for him and others who managed to swim across, the crocs were too busy feasting on the corpses of humans and animals to take any notice.

“We realized that there was certain death on this side, so we decided to cross and take the risk,” Balan said. “It was hide-and-seek. But we swam.”

Balan’s ordeal on India’s isolated Andaman and Nicobar island chain started with the shiver of a lemon tree and the shaking of a tea cup. Then the sea seemed to explode.

He said people were screaming and some prayed as they ran. Balan fled with his wife to a hilltop, where the couple and scores of others hunkered down for the night.

The next day they reached a nearby harbor and a rescue ship came. When the boat was full, Balan and the others started walking to the next harbor, 18 km away.

In their path was the crocodile lagoon.

“It still gives me a shiver. If they had seen me, they would have caught me by the stomach. They catch the soft part of the body and drag you away,” Balan said.

Thank the waves

BANDA ACEH—Warders released inmates at the main jail in Indonesia’s Aceh province minutes before it was flooded in the tsunami disaster but their fate remains unknown, a resident and a policeman said.

Only remnants of the cell walls that housed hundreds of prisoners remained, a reporter who visited the scene on Saturday saw.

GALLE, Sri Lanka—Balage Shriyani held an old photograph of her 7-year-old daughter, dolled up for a school concert in bangles, makeup and a yellow ankle-length dress, against a new photograph of a bloated corpse in a sodden blouse, on its back with legs splayed.

“It’s her,” Shriyani sobbed, sinking her head onto her arm. She had recognized her daughter, Sajini Kaushalya, in a hospital gallery of photographs of unknown victims who had died in the tsunami.

Hospital staff pasted hundreds of photographs on the walls of a ward in hopes that relatives of the missing would be able to identify loved ones. Medics photographed the bodies before burying them.

Many color photographs showed bodies distorted by decomposition; their faces swollen beyond recognition, eyeballs and tongues protruding, lips pulled back in grimaces.

Shriyani studied rows of gruesome images before identifying the green checkered pattern with red trim of the sleeveless blouse that the girl was wearing on the day of her death.

“It’s a very difficult process,” hospital deputy director C.D. Pathirage said. “Sometimes the whole family has died, so there are no relations to identify them.” *INQUIRER wires*

RP to benefit as tourism alternative

From page A1

celebrities as the late John F. Kennedy Jr., movie stars Robert de Niro, Diana Ross, David Hasselhoff, Claire Danes and Tom Cruise, and supermodels Naomi Campbell and Claudia Schiffer.

The November-March period is the peak season for Asian beach destinations as tourists from Europe, North America and North Asia flock there to escape the cold weather.

Thousands of those who died in the gargantuan waves that swamped the popular beach destinations of Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Malaysia and the Seychelles on Dec. 26 were foreign tourists.

With most of the resorts in these regions still recovering from the disaster, countries that escaped the disaster are cautiously eyeing taking up the slack as a result of cancellations.

Indonesian tourism officials, for instance, are hoping that the resort island of Bali, which suffered drops in tourist arrivals because of a terrorist bombing that killed 202 people there in 2002 but which was completely untouched by the tsunami, could stage a recovery as an alternative destination.

Philippine tourism officials are cautious about the prospects of the Philippines as an alternative destination for wary tourists.

Nepomuceno said most Philippine resorts are usually fully booked this time of the year anyway. She said many resorts are already booked up to February, particularly by East Asians wishing to celebrate Chinese New Year in the Philippines.

As a result, Nepomuceno said there might be difficulty in accommodating any significant cancellations from tourists who had planned holidays in the tsunami-stricken areas.

“We’re still in the peak season, but we’re already starting to get interest [from foreign travelers] in future bookings so we have to promote,” she said.

The DOT has no exact figures of how many overseas inquiries or bookings have been made to Philippine resorts as a result of cancellations.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano has instructed the department’s overseas attachés and regional directors to coordinate with travel agencies, as well as owners of resorts and other tourism destinations here, to expand and intensify their promotional efforts.

“I have asked them to provide details on the various classes of resorts and other facilities so that interested travelers will be adequately informed in making their decision to visit the Philippines,” he said.

The DOT reported that more foreign tourists came to the country last year despite travel warnings from foreign governments, with 2004 total arrivals surpassing the 2.22 million record arrivals of 1997.

Preliminary data gathered by the department showed that actual arrivals at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport from January to Dec. 27 in 2004 alone reached 2,233,921.

Total foreign visitor arrivals in 2003 was about 1.9 million.

Figures on arrivals in other ports of entry, like the Davao, Mactan, Laoag and Clark international airports, as well as the sea ports, have yet to be collated and added to the figure.

Durano called 2004 “a banner year for tourism” because foreigners still flocked to the country despite the travel advisories from the United States, Japan, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Britain.

He said tourist receipts during the same 10-month period posted a hefty 32.39 percent growth, to $1.61 billion from $1.22 billion in 2003, clearly reflecting the industry’s potential as a major dollar earner and even as a job provider.

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Urgent change

EDITORIAL

THE PRESIDENT has called it right. The new year is "a year of urgent change"—for the country, but especially for her administration. Change, like charity, begins at home.

In her New Year's message, and in news conferences, President Macapagal-Arroyo called on the people to "act now as one nation." She pinpointed her priorities for 2005: "As your leader, I pledge to you that we will improve tax collection, pass a budget that will support our 10-point plan and pro-poor agenda and take executive action to break the culture of corruption."

The President first sounded the call for urgent change two weeks ago, during the anniversary rites of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The context then was rather more specific; on the eve of the funeral of election rival Fernando Poe Jr., she was attempting to banish the undying ghost of military restiveness. The key paragraph in her speech was the one where she made her assumption explicit.

"When January kicks in, we are in for a formidable test of performance and delivery of results in all areas of national concern. After all, the best defense against military adventurism is sound governance founded on moral leadership."

That "after all" gave the game away, revealing an unbecoming anxiety in the Palace. That did more to fan speculation about restive colonels than the unusual decision to hold the AFP rites inside Malacañang (not, as tradition dictates, on the Camp Aguinaldo parade ground).

In the AFP speech, the President went on to enumerate her priorities in the same order—tax collection, a pro-poor agenda, executive action against corruption—before concluding on a similarly telling note: "I expect you the soldiers to be by my side, to man the flanks by keeping all threats to national security at bay."

Her New Year's message, however, did not mention national security at all. Perhaps she has sensed that the immediate, post-funeral threat had subsided in the last two weeks. Or, perhaps, she has recognized a change in public sentiment, from a combustible outrage to a less incendiary but still dangerous impatience, this time with the pace of change. She tried to deflect it, cleverly, by saying she too champed at the bit. "I'm impatient, too, for the urgent change to be made." But her diction suggests a troubling premise: She expects change not to start with herself, but to come from somewhere else.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye weighed in with his own improvisation on the presidential theme, broadcasting his New Year's wish "that each one of us would, instead of complaining, backstabbing or blaming, take positive action, no matter how small, to improve our lives."

There is that—and more—to be done. But Bunye cannot wish the President's role as chief example-setter away. Whether we like it or not, the nation takes its cue from the President. That is why "urgent change" must begin, personally, with her.

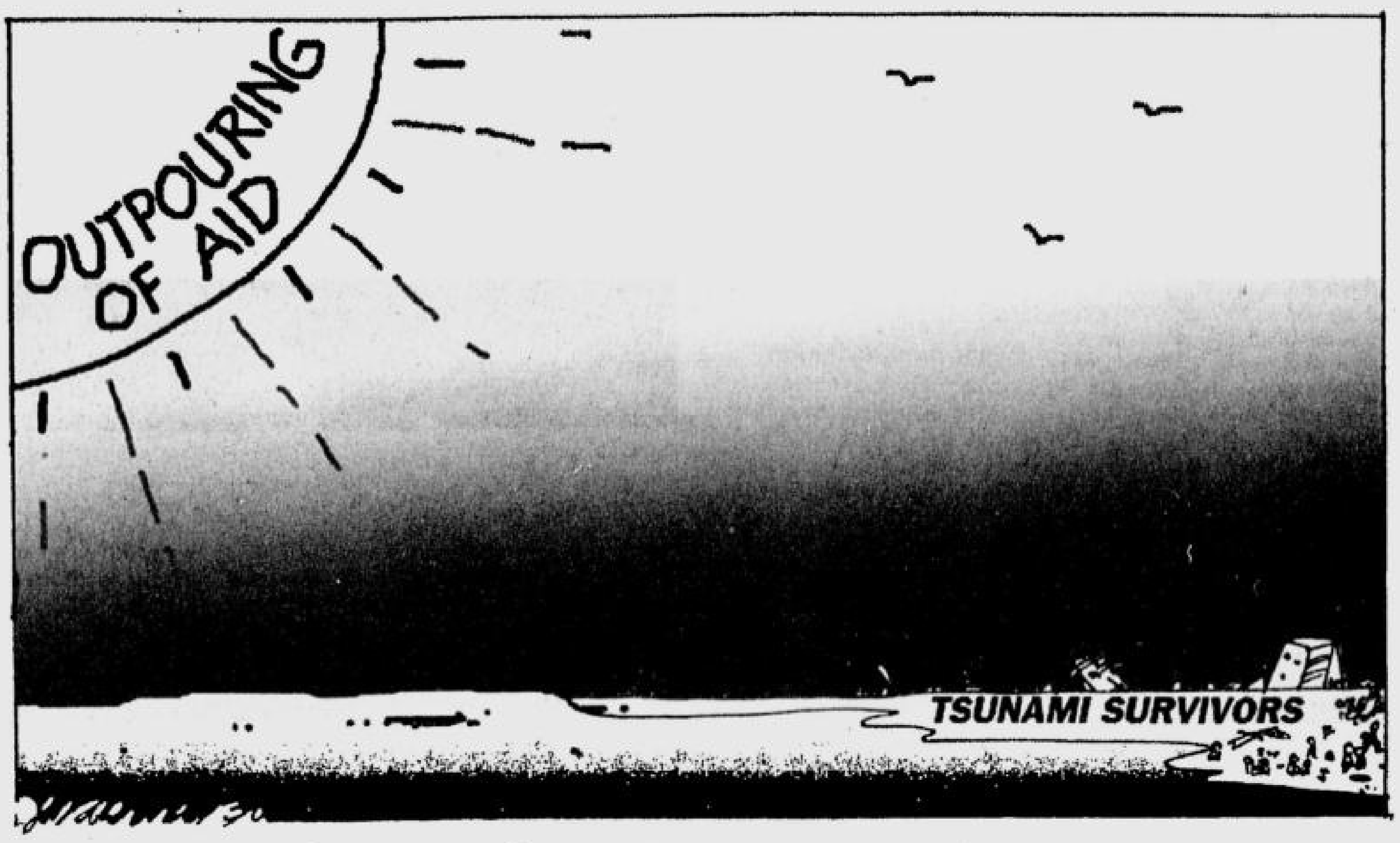
We do not mean her infamous temper, which makes good copy but is irrelevant in policymaking. We mean "sound governance founded on moral leadership."

The President squandered an astonishing amount of the political capital she accumulated after last year's election, and in only a few months, by treating political favors as though they were state policy. The appointment of obvious incompetents or obviously political choices sapped public confidence.

The flip-flopping on the crucial issue of the fiscal crisis—at first ignored, and then acknowledged, and then after only three months inexplicably declared as solved—heightened public doubt about the President's political program.

The inconsistency in her relationships with other power players—coddling controversial appointees who mismanaged public institutions, backing down from a confrontation with telephone company and cigarette firm executives, applying the full force of the law to out-of-favor businessmen—deepened public concern about her political will, or lack of it.

Urgent change thus means restoring public confidence by demonstrating political will on a difficult, long-term issue. She can start by firing the favored but incompetent.



One firecracker victim is one too many

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

AS this column predicted last Dec. 29, a strip of firecracker stalls in Bocaue, Bulacan, caught fire when sparks ignited a stack of firecrackers, killing seven persons. Almost every year, houses—usually converted into firecracker factories—explode and catch fire because of carelessness. Always, there are casualties. This time, it is a row of roadside stalls selling pyrotechnic products.

And yet, government authorities—Malacañang, the Department of Interior and Local Government, the police as well as the provincial and municipal governments—do nothing to prevent a repetition of the tragedies. The Friday fire was the seventh involving firecracker factories and stalls in Bulacan this year. Only last September, a firecracker factory exploded in Sta. Maria town, killing two workers.

Obviously, it is imperative that we adopt stricter rules and monitor more closely the manufacture, quality and storage of pyrotechnic products. So why are government agencies not doing these? Some officials could be liable for multiple homicide through negligence. People keep dying in firecracker incidents so regularly it is almost as if this is the administration's way of controlling population. Stop the population explosion with firecracker explosions? Ha, ha!

For sure, the government has rules on the manufacture of pyrotechnics to make them safe, but nobody pays attention to them, including the public officials and employees who are supposed to enforce them. For example, no firecracker is supposed to have more than 0.2 gm of explosive. But those firecrackers that blasted scores of limbs last New Year's Eve obviously have much more than that. What were the government inspectors of firecracker factories doing?

Obviously, too, the firecracker factories in Bulacan and elsewhere are unsafe. So is the manufacturing process. Else, why do they keep blowing up?

Also obviously, the storing and selling of the products are faulty. Else, why do houses and stalls where they are kept explode?

The usual alibi is that the powerful firecrackers come from illegal manufacturers. A convenient excuse. But it is no secret that even licensed manufacturers are making the illegal firecrackers because they think customers want more powerful firecrackers. For example, the product that started last Friday's fire was a "bomb shell." As the name implies, it was a powerful one, with more than 0.2 gm of explosive, and therefore illegal.

These powerful (*pla-pla*, whistle-bomb, thunder, etc.) and illegal explosives are being sold openly, in plain view of policemen. But do the cops stop them? Are you kidding?

Sometimes, the police conduct well-publicized raids and seizures of illegal firecrackers, but more often than not, the policemen themselves sell the seized firecrackers and keep the proceeds.

And let's not kid ourselves. Some manufactures, licensed and unlicensed, bribe policemen and government inspectors—perhaps including higher officials—to look the other way.

Under the principle of command responsibility, mayors, governors, the interior secretary and police officers may be held liable for criminal negligence everytime somebody dies in an incident involving firecrackers.

An aftermath of a firecracker accident that can easily be prevented by inspectors is the incidence of tetanus. Tetanus is almost always a fatal disease. Victims of firecracker explosions get into a very high risk of contracting tetanus.

The reason is that carabao or cattle manure is mixed with the explosive substances to make the firecracker more powerful. Manure is a fertile breeding ground for the tetanus bacillus. It enters the body through a break in the skin, such as a wound caused by a firecracker blast. Even a slight injury can lead to a tetanus infection.

Rules should prohibit the putting of animal dung in firecrackers. And it should be quite easy for inspectors to see if manure is being mixed with the explosives.

A "safe" firecracker doesn't just mean a "less powerful" firecracker. It also means a firecracker that does not carry a health-threatening disease.

* * *

The police and other government officials are now patting themselves on the back because there were less firecracker victims in the last New Year's Eve celebrations than there were in the previous years. I say, one firecracker victim is one too many. Nobody should be injured by a firecracker. If the government is doing its job, firecrackers should be so safe that even if one accidentally explodes them in his hand, it would not cause injury.

The cigarette-sized firecracker manufactured in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China won't injure you even if it explodes while you're holding it. But our *triangulo*, supposedly our smallest firecracker, can harm you if you don't throw it away quickly enough after lighting it. The fuse is so short and burns so quickly, premature explosions are very common.

Local manufacturers complain of the entry of imported firecrackers; it gives them competition. Instead of complaining, they should copy the imported ones. They are of better quality. And safe!

What's more, they would be able to sell more if our firecrackers are strung together like the imported ones. Instead of exploding the firecrackers one by one, Filipinos could light them by the pack so that they would explode like machine guns. With the string of firecrackers progressively longer, they would be able to sell more. And because they are safe, parents will allow their children to buy them. Hence, more sales.

Sooner than we think

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE IMAGES are mind-boggling: cars perched on rooftops, buildings torn down, beams jutting out of the earth like angry recriminations, rows and rows of bodies strewn on the ground. And wails and lamentation everywhere, some people having lost entire families. "Catastrophe" doesn't come close to describing the swath of destruction left behind by the earthquake that shook Indonesia and the tsunami that engulfed the shores of several countries before the year was out.

As of this writing, the death toll had climbed to 150,000. It wasn't just bridges and buildings that disappeared, whole villages did. The whole place was flattened to the ground, as if a giant scythe had swept across it.

The effects of the tidal wave were no less horrific. A family, now safe back home in the United States, told of the horror they went through. They were vacationing in Phuket, and it was a lovely day, when suddenly to everyone's surprise the sea started receding. It was a scene straight out of a sci-fi movie, the water retreating and leaving behind the slew of stuff that had embedded on the sea floor. Then minutes later, the water began to heave back at the shore.

They saw it from a distance, the sea turning into a "wall of water." That phrase would be used again and again. Most of the bathers were frozen in their tracks, watching in fascinated horror as the water drew near. Some others began screaming and running away. The family that survived did. The father grabbed his two daughters and along with his wife started running toward high ground. They could hear explosions behind them. They managed to reach a restaurant in the shape of a boat before the water burst on them. They clung to whatever they could and for a while lay submerged in water. They thought it was the end until they managed to put their heads up and saw the raging sea tumbling past them.

The aftermath was a nightmare. It's one that has seen the aid institutions of the world rushing to distribute relief goods to the millions of survivors. Indeed, that has seen the Bush administration indicted for foot-dragging when so many American lives were lost on the beaches of Thailand and other countries, in contrast to its rush to go to war in Iraq where only so many oilfields lay untapped by American companies.

I myself have wondered however why so little attention has been given to the environmental sources and implications of the earthquake and tsunami. Reuters is one of the few media organizations that have done so. It has featured stories linking global warming and the environmental mayhem that have been taking place across the planet in recent years. Environmental correspondent Alister Doyle wrote for example: "Scientists say a build-up of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere from human burning of fossil fuels threatens to trigger more powerful storms and raise sea levels, exposing coasts to more erosion... Island nations like the Maldives, swamped by the tsunami, could literally disappear beneath the waves if seas rise."

Well, right now Maldives is hard put to keep its head above water—literally. Last November, I was tempted to write a column on this after having read a news item about a group of scientists warning that global warming was closer than we thought and criticizing the American government for refusing to sign the Rio Accord, one that would limit the emission of industrial wastes into the air. The United States is the No. 1 culprit there. The United States, particularly under Bush, has adamantly refused to agree to it on the ground that it would cripple its industrial production and growth. Well, the recent catastrophe to hit Asia must hint at the global costs, at least for other countries, of that growth.

Of course, there is no direct evidence linking the water that fell on the Sri Lankans, Indians, Thais, Maldivians and Indonesians to global warming. The evidence points to the earthquake that hit Sumatra as the thing that rocked the sea violently, causing it to tumble into different shores. But the sheer plenitude and ferocity of the natural disasters that visited the globe last year alone must suggest that those natural disasters might not owe to completely natural causes.

Here are just **some** of them: floods in Afghanistan (July), Bosnia and Herzegovina (April), Dominican Republic (May), India (July), Namibia (April), Nepal (July), Macedonia (June), Philippines (December); landslides in Kyrgyzstan (April), Nepal (July), Nicaragua (July), Philippines (December); hurricanes in Caribbean (August), Cuba (August and September), Grenada (September), Jamaica (September); cyclones in Madagascar (February), Samoa (January), Slovakia (November), Vanuatu (February); earthquakes in Indonesia (one in February, two in November, one in December), Japan (October), Morocco (February), Pakistan (February); tsunami in various countries of Asia and Africa (December); floods/drought/frost in Peru in February and extreme cold and snowstorms (July).

If these things don't scare the hell out of you, you're already dead. You take them individually and you'll always be able to regard them as freaks of nature. You take them collectively, you'll have to factor in the freakish folly of the human species. It's enough to remind you of the movie, "The Day After Tomorrow," with scientists warning about an impending Ice Age and governments—particularly the one to be found in North America—refusing to heed it. The climate is badly messed up, and the biggest disaster of all is man himself.

Again, take it from your rearview mirror: The vehicles you see gaining on you are closer than you think.

Sandiganbayan plays Santa to coco farmers

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE MOOD in many places around the world last New Year's Eve was somber, news reports indicated. In fact, in several cities, towns and villages around the world, people paused to pray for the victims—the dead and survivors—of the catastrophe that swept South Asia, so aptly described by a writer as "a disaster of biblical proportions."

Here in Metro Manila, the atmosphere was no different. There was a marked scale-down of the traditional fireworks, owing as much to the recent tragedies as to the hard times. Moving from one relative's house to another after midnight of New Year's Eve, my husband and I noted that the smoke from the fireworks was much thinner than in previous years. In many homes, the feasting was also tempered, in deference to those suffering from homelessness, sickness and hunger.

* * *

One thing good about the recent tragedies is that people around the world, including Filipinos, seem to have become more sensitive to the plight of the less fortunate, even as they are grateful to the Almighty for their own gift of life and well-being. Donations are pouring in from all corners of the globe as never before seen on this planet. In the midst of the catastrophes wrought by Nature, we have come to value life even more. I hope this will also improve relations all around.

* * *

As 2004 came to a close, the Sandiganbayan played Santa to the three million coconut farmers by affirming its May 2004 decision declaring their ownership of the 27 percent of the San Miguel Corp. shares and the 72.2 percent of the United Coconut Planters' Bank shares that the group of Eduardo Cojuangco had fought hard to keep and control in the past 20 years. As Quezon Rep. Rafael Nantes noted to this columnist, the recent motion for reconsideration that the Sandiganbayan junked was the group's 800th motion in 17 years! Now, what's left with Cojuangco is the bloc of 20 percent SMC shares that he acquired from the Zobel-Roxas group, which he claims to have been acquired with his own funds.

* * *

The graft court's decision is a major victory for the government which has maintained that the money used to buy the SMC and UCPB blocs in question came from the coco levies and therefore the investment should be held in trust by the government for the coconut farmers. It was they who paid those levies in the first place. Now the problem is how to ensure that these coco farmers—who comprise one-third of the agriculture sector but remain the poorest and most exploited of the lot—get what is justly theirs in benefits.

The bloc of 27 percent SMC shares is estimated to be worth P50 billion; the interest from this alone was placed a few months back at P1.7 billion. Former Philippine Coconut Authority chief Jose Romero and Representative Nantes have stressed at various forums that for starters, the P1.7 billion interest should be harnessed immediately to rehabilitate the coconut industry. Nantes has filed a bill to this effect.

* * *

The coconut industry was once the anchor of our agricultural sector, it fell on hard times owing to several factors. Among them: the exploitation of the industry by a few, enormously enriching themselves in the process; and the campaign abroad by competitors to degrade coconut oil.

Developing the coconut industry has become imperative for several reasons. As former PCA chief Danilo Coronacion pointed out in the dzRH program that Cecile Alvarez and I co-host, there is need to replace the aging and ailing coconut trees in the country. Coronacion said Indonesia has left us behind in this aspect, as its stock of trees now numbers over 3.2 million. (We have about three million.) Then too, as Romero has noted, the industry is at the threshold of some really significant breakthroughs. These include the definitive researches on several fronts, particularly regarding the extra-virgin coconut oil's medicinal values (notably in strengthening the immune system and in dermatological medicine) and the use of coconut oil as fuel additive.

* * *

Romero proposes an "institutional approach" to rehabilitate the industry. He advocates that an inter-agency presidential committee be created to handle the trust funds that will be derived from the huge SMC and UCPB blocs. Romero, who once headed both the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) and the PCA, opines that the CIIF does not have the mandate to develop the industry; neither does the PCA have the capability to undertake the imperative task of research and development that will ensure value-added for the coconut product, agricultural extension work, etc.

* * *

In the face of the Sandiganbayan's decision once and for all declaring the coco levies as held in trust by the government for the benefit of the coconut farmers, it's important that the leaders of the industry stick together and make sure that these funds go to their true beneficiaries—the impoverished coco farmers. There are all kinds of opinions as to where these funds should go. Some say they should be incorporated into the budget to help correct the deficit; in fact, reports say the Palace is mulling on selling these shares to help raise funds for the cash-strapped government. Some House members say these should go to agrarian reform. I think it should be used for the benefit of the coco farmers, but this would only happen if those who have the farmers' interest at heart would stick together and mobilize for them. Among them are the members of the House who represent the 65 or so coconut-producing provinces.

Susan, Marcos also stole our dreams

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

JUDGMENT by comparison seems to be the order of the day for those who want to draw out self-serving meanings from the wake and burial of Fernando Poe Jr. For this reason, there is a predisposition to compare FPJ with Ninoy Aquino. Both men's funerals drew a mammoth crowd of mourners.

How about judgment by contrast? Because the similarities simply do not exist.

Death by martyrdom and death by natural cause are, needless to say, worlds apart. Taking a look at Ninoy in his coffin, one saw a blood-stained, disfigured face contorted in pain. That was definitely not the case with the serene countenance of FPJ in his dapper signature coat and tie. His was hardly the stuff of which revolutions are made. Political adventurism, perhaps, by those who wished to read his death in that manner. I like it the way moviemaker Isah Red put it. With FPJ, the air was abuzz with resentment (against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo). With Ninoy, it was a deeper emotion—that of passion and rage, he said.

Ninoy's death was politically charged. Dying of cerebral thrombosis in the intensive care unit of a posh Manila hospital that had a reputation for cutting-edge medical technology is hardly the stuff political dramas are made of. Somebody even had the gall to weave a tall tale about FPJ having been poisoned by Ms Arroyo's minions, the kind of poison that sends an enemy into a stroke. What a cheap way of scriptwriting politics into what was clearly a will of God which FPJ's death was.

That FPJ was a good man of boundless generosity for the poor and needy is not hard to see. The number of people coming out to attest to his unknown deeds of charity was nothing short of impressive. FPJ was in a sense a case for the Purple Heart.

But an antithesis to Ms Arroyo he was not. That one is not hard to see, too. A look at the ilk of traditional politicians who went to his wake gave us a disturbing scenario. Imee and Imelda Marcos; Juan Ponce Enrile, the unrepentant martial law henchman; Marcos' bright boy Ernesto Maceda; the Escuderos (who, despite the brilliance of young Chiz, are always on the wrong side of the political fence), not to mention President Estrada, Sen. Loi Estrada, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, and helicopter-riding Capt. Jude Estrada. Why, even scot-free Laarni was there, and the new horde of turncoats, and hanging-on *desperados*. So what is new? What is the alternative? The *bagong umaga* is nothing but a combination of *fantasia* and hot air.

The Filipino dream is now hitched, literally, to the stars. Thanks to Ms Arroyo who has brought us into this rut, who continues to lethargize us into thinking she's for the poor when in fact she isn't. But we are in for a catastrophe if we allow ourselves to believe that our salvation comes from movie icons who play out the roles of swashbuckling heroes on screen. Real-life heroism—and confronting real-life antagonists—is a serious stuff. It is not for any Tom, Dick and Harry whose only credential is the ability to attract throngs of people for a box-office hit. Remember the Pied Piper? No, it is not on illusion, but only on ideology, where we can hitch the Filipino dream.

I would assume that Niño Muhlach does not have an inkling of this reality. Perched on an elevated platform at the North Cemetery, Muhlach at times experimented on "agit-prop" during what was called "solemn" funeral rites. At one point, the actor compared FPJ's funeral with that of Ninoy's. Perhaps, he was too young in 1983 to make sense of the two million weeping people who brought Ninoy to his grave. He certainly was neither here nor there when Ninoy's funeral march took the whole day to wind through Manila, finally reaching the gravesite at 10 o'clock in the evening. FPJ's funeral failed to surpass Ninoy's, but that was not to be so in Muhlach's cheap political scriptwriting.

Susan's opening salvo on the first day of the wake about stolen dreams being irreplaceable—implicitly referring to her husband being cheated of his presidential victory—reveals much about her naiveté and her selective sense of history. Albeit touted by many as her *coup de théâtre* and her feisty introduction to what some would wish to perceive as her foray into politics, the statement holds no water at all. Mr. and Mrs. FPJ were always Marcos supporters. Lest we forget, it was the conjugal dictators themselves who stood as sponsors at their wedding. And since then they never yet had any change of heart, unlike some of their enlightened colleagues in show biz. If truly the *masa* are in their hearts, well nothing was heard from them when many of the Filipino *masa* suffered under the dictatorship. And so Karen Davila's pathetic response to Susan's tirade against a television network would have made sense had she remembered that Susan did not say a word against media repression during the Marcos years. Then Karen's tears would have made sense.

Like Marcos before them, and the rest of our national leaders after him, Susan has not metamorphosed into a possible worthy leader. There is in the metamorphosis simply a cat just out of the bag: Susan's politics will still be of the *trapo* variety. And we know for sure she will not be any different from our present crop of political leaders.

Where were you, Susan, when Marcos stole our dreams?

* * *

Comments to monta@cu-cdo.edu.ph

More on racism

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

VICTOR Buencamino reminisced that besides the Elizalde-led walkout from the Polo Club, other racially motivated events involving private clubs took place. According to him William "Bill" Shaw—of Shaw Boulevard fame—helped form the Wack Wack Golf Club because of the racism of his fellow Americans. It was said that "he did not feel at home in the exclusive Manila Golf Club in Caloocan every time he brought along his Filipina wife and his *mestizo* child, so he aligned himself with Filipino aficionados and founded Wack Wack."

Another "racial battleground" was the Rotary Club of Manila. Organized in 1919, only two of its 38 founders were Filipinos (Gabriel La O and Gregorio Nieva). It was only in 1933 that a Filipino, Arsenio Luz, came to head it, followed by Carlos P. Romulo and Buencamino himself.

Indignities, such as shivering with his fellow Filipino "underlings" in a tent in Baguio, while Dean C. Worcester snoozed away in a room with a fireplace in the Pines Hotel, made Buencamino strike back by boldly demanding equal treatment. During an expedition to fight rinderpest, "A handful of American officers ... set up an exclusive mess all to themselves. I walked into their mess tent one morning, introduced myself as the new vet just out of Cornell and told them I think a doctor rated a seat at the officers' table. They were too dumbfounded to say no." More on American officers later.

Anyway, as I hinted earlier, it was not in the club room, but in the dance hall, that Buencamino struck what he felt to be the biggest blow against racism. The cabarets were all segregated: "The Sta. Ana Cabaret and the Lerma night club had areas reserved exclusively for whites while Filipinos were secluded in a taxi dance area down the hall, fenced off from where the whites amused themselves."

Then one day the president of the Senate asked Governor General F.B. Harrison to "spearhead a move to knock down the race barrier." Harrison agreed. Buencamino recounted: "Governor Harrison made a reservation for a small party at the Lerma cabaret. A large table was reserved for him in the middle of the dance floor in a section exclusively reserved for white VIPs. The word had got around that the Governor was entertaining some important visitors.

"That evening the Governor General's limousine rolled into the front door of the Lerma cabaret, followed by a smaller car. The Governor gathered his guests and their ladies and led the group to the center of the cabaret section where only Occidentals had been permitted to tread before.

"There were startled looks from the all-white patrons as the mixed group walked in.

"Harrison's special guests: [the President of the Senate] and his cronies Buenaventura Barona and Dr. Victor Buencamino, and their ladies. We had a juicy steak dinner chased by a steady flow of wine, and we danced all night, somewhat pleased inside us we were making a little bit of history." Soon after, all the cabarets dropped the color barrier.

Of course, this was the same Harrison who was later reported to have washed his hands with carbolic soap after gladhanding a delegation of Igorots. Well, the American community (a mean and highly bigoted lot, as most colonists are: that's why the aloof Leonard Wood continues to be the idol of American "old-timers") resented Harrison for hobnobbing with the natives. Other Americans, like Douglas MacArthur, also endeared themselves to Filipino leaders by their being socially at ease with them.

It took the war to demolish the racial barriers, not that old habits didn't die hard. The other *pensionado* I mentioned, Antonio de las Alas (imprisoned after the return of the Americans for being a "collaborator"; Claro M. Recto was his jail-mate; both of them suspected that much of the American attitude toward them was racially motivated), a senator-elect at the outbreak of the war, wrote in his prison diary,

"Since the attack on Pearl Harbor, there was [an] absolute blackout throughout Manila. We passed terrible nights. Oftentimes, we heard revolver or gun shots. We understand it was to enforce the blackout. The guards also shot at persons moving suspiciously or signalling, or at the places the signalling was coming from. We actually saw many such signals, evidencing the presence of spies and fifth columnists.

"... In the day time, there were many people in the streets. During air raids, the air-raid wardens were kept very busy. These are paid employees and they were very strict in the performance of their duties. The warden in front of our house, a man by the name of Emilio, was especially efficient. We noticed that the white people were reluctant to obey him. I remember an incident which I witnessed. The warden ordered a white couple to stop because there was an air raid; but they continued on their way. The warden ran after them to stop them. An American officer happened to be around and he drew his revolver and threatened to shoot the warden if he insisted. The warden, fearing for his life, let the couple go. When the officer drew his revolver, I immediately ran to my house to get my revolver. My intention was to shoot the officer if he shot at the warden since the latter was merely performing his official duty."

After the war, of course, as GIs arrived in droves, the gap that existed between most Filipinos and foreigners, closed. Contacts that were previously restricted to Filipino officials and their friendlier American counterparts, with the majority of the American population preferring to keep to their exalted selves, had to be broadened. But more racial incidents were forthcoming.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

Difference of opinions

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

LAST Dec. 26, the Inquirer reported that Filipinos in different parts of the world keenly monitored the death and funeral of former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. through INQ7.net, the website that the newspaper operates in tandem with television giant GMA-7.

According to the news, when Poe died on Dec. 15, the website received 2.2 million page views from 1.5 million visitors, its highest-ever one-day record. The enthusiasm for information about his death continued until his burial on Dec. 22.

During the same period, I received a lot of letters and e-mail from the readers about the Inquirer's coverage of those events. Some protested what they perceived as the newspaper's bias toward Poe, as it indirectly cast doubts on the validity of President Macapagal-Arroyo's victory in last May's national elections.

Others praised the Inquirer for its extensive coverage of the event, in particular the photos that showed the multitude that stood in line all day and all night for the opportunity to see Poe's remains while it lay in state at the Sto. Domingo Church. The throng of mourners was compared to the huge crowd that attended the funeral of the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr. in 1983.

I am used to getting contrasting comments about the way the newspaper reports important events that have political color in them. The Inquirer is either pro- or anti- a particular political figure depending on the reader's political orientation. And there are as many political views as there are people who want their voices to be heard on issues that they think affect the national interest.

Social levels

While browsing through my mailbox during the holiday break, I took a second look at the letters and e-mail I received about the newspaper's reporting on Poe's death. I noticed that the comments had an unmistakable "social class" pattern.

The letters that were critical of the Inquirer's coverage came from readers who belong to the upper and middle classes of our society. The comments of those who thought the newspaper did a good job emanated from the lower social levels.

My observation is based on the addresses given by the readers and the information about themselves that they gave in their letters. The address gives a clue on whether the reader lives in a gated community or an ordinary residential area. Also, most readers indicate the profession or business that they are engaged in whenever they write to me. If the writer is a lawyer, engineer, doctor or architect, that professional description is usually affixed before his or her name.

I am no psychologist or sociologist, but after having read hundreds of letters, I have developed a sixth sense of sorts that gives me an idea about the possible personal characteristics of a letter writer.

I think the readers' financial or social status has a strong influence on their perception on whether the Inquirer was fair and objective in its coverage of Poe's hospitalization and funeral.

The people who belong to the "A" and "B" classes of our society—who have not kept secret their concerns about a "mere actor" becoming president of the country—must have felt uncomfortable with, as one reader put it, the newspaper's "adulatory treatment" of Poe. They criticized the newspaper for subtly stirring the public against the administration with its reports on the thousands of people who stood under the sun for hours for the opportunity to view Poe's remains.

On the other hand, the hoi polloi who saw in Poe a salvation from their financial problems may have found comfort in the Inquirer's coverage of their fallen idol's last moments in this world. For them, the accounts and photos about the multitude who flocked to Sto. Domingo Church were proof that Poe was the real winner in the last elections.

Expatriates

The e-mail I received from Filipinos working or living abroad showed a similar "social standing" characteristic.

The overseas Filipino workers were appreciative of the newspaper's coverage. A Filipino assigned to a remote oil site in Saudi Arabia said he and his colleagues logged on to the newspaper's website during their breaks to get up-to-the-minute information about Poe's funeral and burial.

But some Filipinos based in North America expressed dissatisfaction with what they considered as the newspaper's pro-Poe and anti-Arroyo style of reporting. A Fil-American complained that, by giving Poe's death banner treatment, the Inquirer was indirectly aiding the "communists who want to take over the country."

I was not surprised by the divergence of opinions of Filipino expatriates on national issues. The OFWs, especially those working in the Middle East, seem to have a different take on events in the country compared to the Filipinos who are based in developed Western countries.

This is understandable because the two sets of Filipinos abroad work or live under different conditions. Those in the First World are usually more financially secure, live with their families and carry the citizenship of their adopted countries.

In contrast, the OFWs are not as financially endowed, their families are left behind in the Philippines, and they have to return to the country, whether they like it or not, upon the termination of their employment contracts.

Figuratively, I would put the "hyphenated Filipinos" in the same level as the "A" and "B" classes in our society and the OFWs as the less privileged members. Their financial standings may account, as I earlier hazarded, for their contrasting reactions to the newspaper's coverage of Poe's death.

This early, I have a feeling my comments will not sit well with some of the affected readers. I will be glad to hear from those who have a different explanation on the subject of this article.

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

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PPI

No peace without justice

THIS is in reaction to the editorial titled "Everyone's battle." (PDI, 12/18/04)

As private prosecutors in the plunder case against ousted President Joseph Estrada, we have been present at the hearings and are privy to the proceedings. The prosecution process may be losing steam but the prosecution panel remains unwavering in its commitment to see that justice is done. This the records bear out.

In presenting its 76 witnesses, the prosecution never asked for a single postponement of the trial. The prosecution's case could have been completed earlier were it not for the dilatory maneuverings of the defense. Remember former President Estrada's earlier dismissal of his retained counsels?

The case for the prosecution was completed on April 30, 2003. However, it was only on Oct. 13, 2003 (about six months aftet) that the Sandiganbayan issued a resolution admitting all the evidence presented by the prosecution. And unmindful of the insistence of the prosecution, the defense presented its first witness only on Sept. 15, 2004. In other words, almost one and a half years elapsed before the Sandiganbayan finally compelled the defense to present its evidence.

The prosecution panel recently asked that the hearings be now conducted thrice a week. The Sandiganbayan has, however, denied the request and this has been sustained by the Supreme Court. The matter is now subject to a motion for reconsideration.

We share your view that the criminal justice process may be susceptible to extraneous considerations and influences. The private prosecutors have publicly joined the vehement protests of the prosecution panel against the many accommodations (not otherwise granted to other detention prisoners) that have been extended to former President Estrada—rest house arrest, passes in and out of his place of detention, and the latest, the trip to Hong Kong.

We also share the concern that the public has not followed through with its demand for justice and for a swift decision on the plunder cases. Despite the possibility that the former president may flee the jurisdiction of our courts, the universities and colleges, the men of the cloth, the concerned businessmen and citizens, the public officials who rode on the crest of the impeachment issue are today nowhere to be heard or seen.

The private prosecutors continue to believe that the accommodations, political or otherwise, made under the guise of "reconciliation" or "humanitarian reasons," but at the expense of justice and truth, will never result in the intended peace or progress and development. Our experience after Edsa I confirms this. "Reconciliation" and "peace" are not synonymous with "compromise" and "submission." There can never be a truly strong republic where there is compromise without principles, or peace without justice. As a people, where do we stand?

—RICARDO G. NEPOMUCENO JR.,
PABLITO V. SANIDAD,
ARNO V. SANIDAD,
LEONARD S. DE VERA,
ANTHONY B. PERALTA,
MARICHU LAMBINO,
CHRISTIAN ROBERT S. LIM

Fire safety is everyone's concern

I AM writing this letter in reaction to the letter of Teresita Uy from Auckland, New Zealand. (PDI 12/28/04)

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) here in the Philippines is already waging a relentless information campaign on fire safety, using media and other communication outlets to educate people on how to prevent the occurrence of fire and respond to such an eventuality. For this purpose, we also conduct fire drills in building establishments and schools.

We don't need more fire-related tragedies to happen in order for the BFP to learn its lesson; in fact, our agency has been clamoring since time immemorial for better firefighting equipment and gears. Locked or blocked fire escapes, even the absence of fire escapes in houses, are definitely a violation of the Fire Code of the Philippines. But we are having a hard time implementing the law because people in the community do not care for their own safety. Others are very undisciplined, in fact, too stubborn, to abide by our fire safety recommendations. Sadly, when tragedy strikes, all blame is quickly thrown upon the BFP.

Fire safety is everybody's concern; everyone must contribute his share. The BFP cannot do it alone, especially because it lacks firefighting gears and rescue tools. Maybe it's high time that people became aware of their social role as our partners in the campaign toward a "fire-safe" society.

—SR. INSP. RENATO
BADONG MARCIAL,
public information officer,
Bureau of Fire Protection,
Regional Headquarters 5,
ANST Bldg., Capt. F. Aquende Dr.,
Old Albay District,
Legazpi City

Conserving environment through population control

IN THE WAKE of the recent environmental tragedies that have befallen our country, the statistics everyone had once taken for granted have now taken on a new light. Everyone is aware of the numbers: four Filipinos are born every minute, making the Philippines the 12th most populous nation in the world (82.6 million people); the Philippines' population growth rate (2.36 percent) and fertility rate (3.7 percent) are in the upper bracket of 206 countries; and, by 2038, the Philippine population is expected to reach 160 million.

Oftentimes, it is the environment that suffers because of the exponential growth of our country's population. Overpopulation is proportional to an increase in resource-consumption, resulting in massive demands for natural and synthetic resources. Deforestation and over-consumption of fuel have led to recent situations like the Quezon floods and the current energy crisis. Waste disposal is also harder to regulate with a massive population, as seen in the polluted rivers and streets of the metropolitan areas.

Considering the increasing cost of living in our country, the impetus to create a policy that responds to this problem has grown exponentially. I believe that it is time for our legislators to look into House Bill 16 authored by Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman.

The bill elevates the issue of overpopulation to the country's national consciousness. One of the most controversial issues surrounding the bill is its advocacy of the two-child policy. Unlike the China and Vietnam model, however, the Philippine two-child policy is non-mandatory and non-coercive; it does not include any penalties for those who fail to abide by it. Instead, the Lagman bill focuses on providing incentives for families who abide by the two-child policy. Tax exemptions and scholarship grants for the families' children are two of the proposed incentives.

The tax breaks and scholarship grants will create enough motivation for couples to think about limiting the size of their families. Given a society with a penchant for large families, effective advocacy of family planning has to be part and parcel of the incentive package. The incentives, in the end, could be the key to motivating our citizens into limiting the population, thus indirectly addressing the needs of the environment.

—ROLAND GLENN T. TUAZON,
Taytay, Rizal,
glenntuazon@gmail.com

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL BOOK DEVELOPMENT BOARD
A. Ma Regidor Street, Area XI, University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines

Please be informed that the following rule on the Cancellation of Registration of Publishers that Produce Poor Quality Textbooks has been approved by the NBDB Governing Board during its Special Board Meeting on 20 December 2004 at the NBDB Conference Room, UP Campus Diliman, Quezon City.

NEW RULE ON THE CANCELLATION OF REGISTRATION OF PUBLISHERS THAT PRODUCE POOR QUALITY TEXTBOOKS

IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES:

1. A complainant (teacher, parent, student, or concerned citizen) files a written sworn statement that alleges and identifies at least ten (10) erroneous portions or items (e.g. errors in facts, concepts, grammar, and computation) of a locally published textbook used in a private elementary or secondary school. The complaint is filed with the NBDB Secretariat through the Cancellation Proceedings Committee with the following attachments:
   a. At least one (1) original copy of the textbook in question;
   b. Payment of P200.00 filing fee, which is waived if the complainant submits three (3) original copies of the textbook.
2. The Cancellation Proceedings Committee forwards the complaint to the Governing Board, which shall form a TEXTBOOK REVIEW COMMITTEE for the purpose.
3. The TEXTBOOK REVIEW COMMITTEE shall have three (3) experts for every learning area, i.e., English, Filipino, Mathematics, Science, and *Araling Panlipunan*, from reputable academic institutions or research centers.
4. The basis for the Textbook Review Committee's evaluation shall be the following:
   a. Grammatical Correctness and Clarity of the Text;
   b. Accuracy of Facts, Information, and Concepts;
   c. Coherence of Ideas;
   d. Other criteria specific to the learning area to be agreed upon by the members of the Textbook Review Committee.
5. During the evaluation, the Textbook Review Committee is given the prerogative to use a point system that is considered applicable, appropriate, and in accordance with the set criteria.
6. The Textbook Review Committee shall prepare a signed report detailing the inaccuracies or errors if there are any in the textbook. The Report shall include specific suggestions or recommendations for the improvement of the book. The Report shall conclude with an overall assessment of the quality of the book.
7. If despite the complaint, the Textbook Review Committee concludes that the book is of high quality, and the Governing Board accepts this conclusion, the book will be awarded with the NBDB Seal of Quality Content. The publisher will be furnished a copy of the Committee Report, after the publisher pays the evaluation fee of P20,000.00.
8. If the Textbook Review Committee concludes that the book has some errors but not enough to make the overall quality poor, and the Governing Board accepts this conclusion, the publisher will be furnished a copy of the Committee Report with suggestions for the improvement of the book, upon payment of the evaluation fee of P20,000.00
9. If the Textbook Review Committee concludes that the book is grossly substandard or of poor quality, the Cancellation Proceedings Committee will furnish the publisher a copy of the Committee Report. The publisher and author(s) of the book will be given an opportunity to present their side through a formal hearing.
10. The Cancellation Proceedings Committee shall assess both the Textbook Review Committee Report and the response of the publisher and author(s). The Cancellation Proceedings Committee then shall make a recommendation to the Governing Board.
11. The Governing Board shall act on the recommendation of the Cancellation Proceedings Committee. After the Governing Board has rendered its decision, the affected party can appeal the decision within fifteen (15) days after the decision has been communicated, otherwise the decision becomes final.

SANCTION

The following sanctions or penalties shall be imposed by the Board upon the registered publisher whose book was found to be grossly substandard or of poor quality:

1) **First Offense** – The registration of the publisher shall be cancelled UNLESS the publisher does the following: (a) stop selling the textbook; (b) pay a fine of P 100,000.00.
2) **Second Offense** - cancellation of registration and inclusion in a *watch list* of entities that are not considered in good standing with the NBDB.

EFFECTIVITY

This policy shall be effective immediately after its publication in one of the major dailies with national circulation. Only private elementary and secondary school textbooks that have been published or revised after the publication of these guidelines are covered by these rules.

A (Christmas) wish of Hacienda Luisita folks

A LOT of things have been said and done about the labor dispute at Hacienda Luisita. We at the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (Catlu) are grateful to all those who have recognized the legitimacy of our demands and have supported us through our difficult struggle. We are also thankful to the members of the family of former President Cory Aquino, who have been trying their best to convince the family to listen to our pleas.

As the nation celebrated the greatest of all miracles—God's gift of love to mankind by sending his only son Jesus Christ to save us—we had hoped that former President Aquino and the Cojuangco family would include us in their list of those with whom they intended to share their blessings last Christmas. If they could shower their attention and share their riches with street children, criminals and prostitutes, why not with the poor people of Hacienda Luisita?

Last Christmas Day was the 49th day of our strike. In spite of the bitter things that have transpired at the picket line, including the death of eight of our loved ones, we are ready to sweep aside the veil of rancor, engage in serious negotiations and share the spirit of the season just past.

We are asking a very simple gift from President Aquino and her family: please sit down with us and bring a ray of hope to us and our families.

We are not asking for riches: just our jobs and small increases in our wages and benefits. In the spirit of Christmas and of justice which should live every day in our hearts.

—RICARDO RAMOS,
president,
Central Azucarera de Tarlac
Labor Union (Catlu),
Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac City.
azucarera@yahoo.com

Let loggers pay for Umiray repair

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo should compel the big logging syndicates to shoulder the cost of repairing the 13-kilometer Umiray tunnel in General Nakar, Quezon.

Malacañang's logging clients in Quezon and Aurora provinces like International Hardwood and Veneer Corp. (13,527 hectares in Mauban, Quezon); Timberland Forest Products (34,660 hectares in General Nakar, Quezon); Industries Development Corp. (48,777 hectares in Aurora province); RCC Timber Co. (23,140 hectares in Aurora); Green Circle Corp. (30,000 hectares in General Nakar, Quezon) and Top Lite Corp. (8,630 hectares in Aurora province), not the taxpaying public, should carry the cost of rehabilitating the Umiray tunnel.

This should be part of the punitive actions and corrective measures, including the possible filing of criminal and civil suits, against these logging corporations which are responsible for the biggest man-made calamity to hit the country in 2004.

We wonder why up to now Malacañang is afraid to take the necessary steps against these big logging companies. Perhaps the issue is so explosive that it could burst right inside the Office of the President. It is against public interest to coerce the taxpaying public to shoulder the burden of repairing the damaged Umiray tunnel while those primarily responsible for the destruction are not made accountable.

While Malacañang befuddles the public with motherhood statements, this bunch of loggers is totally at peace and unperturbed because they have the Office of the President taking the cudgels for them.

—GERRY ALBERT CORPUZ,
information officer,
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5 dead in Cavite family feud

A PETTY clash over one family's rowdy drinking bout on New Year's eve resulted in the massacre of its four members and the killing of a village official's brother in Barangay Halang, Amadeo, Cavite Saturday.

Barangay captain Zosimo Poniente called the attention of Alvin Mendoza when neighbors complained of his family's boisterous drinking, said Director Oscar Calderon, Calabarzon police chief.

Insulted, Mendoza got back at Poniente, killing his brother Reynaldo at around 2:30 p.m. Saturday, the official said.

Reynaldo had just alighted from his Nissan Terrano when the 38-year-old Mendoza shot him repeatedly in front of his family's store, according to Calderon's report.

About an hour and half later, it was Mendoza's turn to die.

He sought refuge at his family's house some 300 meters from the Poniente store, unwittingly dragging his kin to death.

The barangay captain, backed by eight men, attacked the house and shot it out with the family, police said.

In the end, Mendoza, his parents Danilo, 70, and Juliana, 68, and his brother Jessie, 28, died of multiple bullet wounds.

Zosimo Poniente was also wounded and was rushed to the hospital, Calderon said.

Witnesses later identified his companions as Fenny Poniente; Roman, Oyong and Gregorio Amparo; and Isabelo, Froilan, Eddie, and Mario Dinglasan. Mario was wounded.

Calderon said Isabelo and Mario Dinglasan were later arrested in pursuit operations. Germinio Poniente was arrested while being treated at the Andres Bonifacio Memorial Hospital in Trece Martires City.

The three were among those identified by the witnesses as being with Zosimo when he allegedly barged into Mendoza's house.

He said they were tracking down another wounded suspect, a certain Froilan Dinglasan, who was believed to have been brought to another hospital.

The items recovered at the Mendoza house showed the viciousness of the shootout.

There were at least 28 slugs for M-16 and M-14 rifles, caliber 30 carbine, and a 9 mm pistol. Alvin Mendoza had a fragmentation grenade.

Senior Supt. Roberto Rosales said the fight between the two families started when Poniente berated one of Mendoza's brothers, who was supposedly mentally retarded, for lighting a firecracker near the former's house on Dec. 21.

Ten days after, on New Year's eve, Zosimo allegedly got angry with Mendoza for creating a scene after getting drunk with some residents.

Rosales said the two families were related to each other.

Calderon had deployed three police teams in the area. Calderon said he had also placed Mendoza's policeman-brother, PO1 Emil Mendoza, under the custody of the Noveleta police chief where he was currently assigned.

Rosales said Emil was relieved from his post at the Amadeo police station after the shootout in May which left seven people dead. *Christian Esguerra in Manila and Marlon Ramos, PDI S. Luzon Bureau*

Fewer 'cracker victims reported in New Year revelry

By the PDI Bureaus

FEWER persons were hurt during the New Year's eve revelry in Luzon and the Visayas, police and hospital records show.

At least 225 persons were hurt in firecracker-related blasts and nine others hit by stray bullets in Luzon, while 105 were injured in the Visayas.

In Central Luzon, at least 102 people, mostly children, were hurt in firecracker blasts on New Year's Eve in six of the seven provinces in Central Luzon. Last year, 185 people were hurt in the New Year's eve celebrations.

No injuries were reported in Aurora.

Pampanga had the highest number of blast victims at 30.

At least 23 were hurt in Bulacan, 21 in Nueva Ecija, 15 in Olongapo City, 12 in Angeles City, nine in Bataan, eight in Tarlac and five in Zambales.

In Pampanga, 19 people were treated for firecracker blasts at the Jose B. Lingad Memorial Regional Hospital (JBLMRH).

The City of San Fernando health office monitored at least five victims while the police recorded six.

Most of those taken to JBLMRH were children who suffered wounds in the hands and eyes after rummaging the night's trash for firecrackers, said Dr. Paulo Castillo who led the team of surgeons at the hospital's emergency unit.

Castillo said the hospital treated eight firecracker blast victims since Dec. 25.

Critical

In Zambales, Arwin Fontecha of San Felipe town was in critical condition after his arm was wounded by an explosion from a five-star firecracker.

Dr. Virgilio Barroga, surgical chief of the Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Hospital in Iba town, said they referred Fontecha to the James L. Gordon Memorial Hospital (JLGMH) in Olongapo City for amputation of his right arm.

Barroga said this was the first time the hospital registered the least casualties.

In Olongapo City, officials of the JLGMH placed the number of firecracker blast victims at 15.

Ferdie Magrata, hospital administrator, said this year's record of firecracker-related injuries dropped due to increased public awareness and the economic crunch.

He said a few days before the New Year's Eve revelry, four children were taken to the JLGMH due to mishandling of firecrackers.

In Bulacan, Dr. Jericho Javier, doctor on duty at the emergency room of the Bulacan Provincial Hospital in the City of Malolos, said the victims in the province suffered only minor burns and wounds.

In Pangasinan, doctors at the Region I Medical Center in Dagupan City recorded 21 people who sought treatment for firecracker-related blasts.

Dr. Jesus Canto, hospital chief, said the figure was below the more than 70 victims last year.

"Every year, the number of casualties go down," Canto said.

At least one victim of stray bullet from San Fabian town was hit in the right abdomen at 1 a.m. Saturday.

In Isabela, police and hospital officials recorded at least three firecracker blast victims and one stray bullet victim during the revelry.

Senior Supt. Napoleon Estilles, Isabela police director, said they did not receive reports of indiscriminate gun firing.

Three children in Tumauini were reported hurt after the firecrackers they lighted exploded in their hands.

In Santiago City, police said Danilo Matias, 19, was hit by stray bullet as he was lighting a firecracker in front of their house in Balintocatoc Village.

In Cagayan, records from the Cagayan Valley Medical Center showed that only two people were treated for firecracker-related injury and one for stray bullet.

In Abra, police recorded six firecracker-related injuries and a case of stray bullet injury.

In Baguio City, police recorded at least 13 firecracker blast victims in the city and in the towns of La Trinidad, Itogon and Tuba in Benguet.

In Ilocos Sur, police reports said a nipa hut was burned in Barangay San Pablo in Narvacan town after a falling skyrocket-type firecracker fell on it.

Only one firecracker blast victim was reported.

Southern Luzon

There were 77 incidents of firecracker burning, 79 persons injured, 76 patients treated for minor injuries and five cases of persons hit by stray bullets from 6 a.m., Dec. 31 to 10 a.m., Jan. 1, in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon).

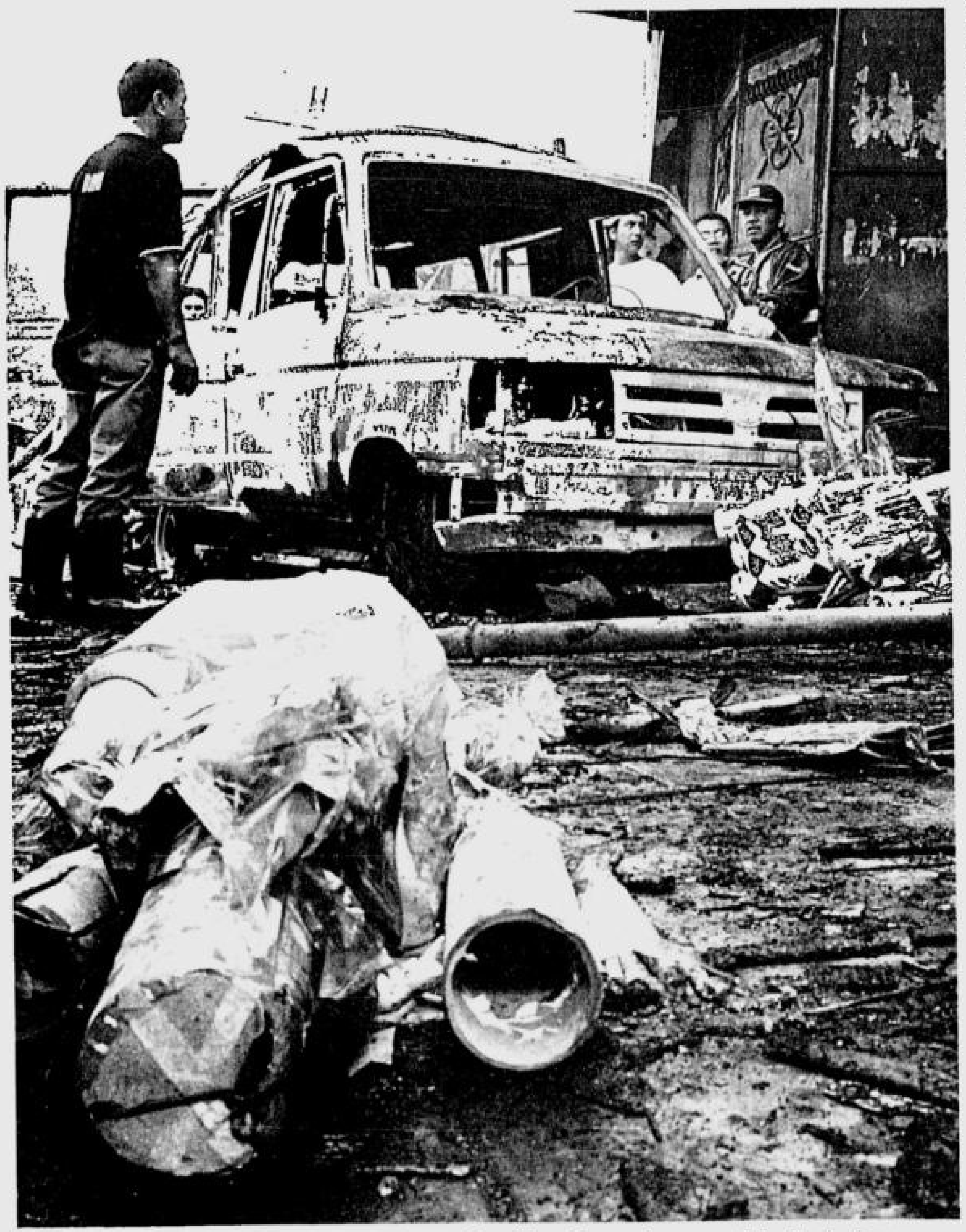
Of the cases of stray bullet wounding, four happened in Cavite and one in Laguna, according to Director Oscar Calderon, Calabarzon police chief.

He said there was 60 percent less firecracker-related incidents in the region, compared to 2004.

Ten persons, including two four-year-old children, were brought to different hospitals in Quezon and Oriental Mindoro for minor firecracker-related injuries during the New Year's revelry, police reports said.

Seven were injured in Lucena City, including two four-year-old children.

In Oriental Mindoro, police reported that three persons were injured by firecrackers.



A BIG fire on Dec. 31 in Bocaue, Bulacan triggered by a lighted firecracker, caused the death of seven people.

RUDY ESPERAS

In the Visayas, blast injuries stood at 105 (Cebu-57, Bohol-4, Tacloban City–7, Negros Occidental–25, and Iloilo-12) against last year's 154.

In Iloilo City, 9-year-old boy was grazed by a stray bullet several minutes after midnight. SPO1 Elmer Tabares of Mandurriao Police Station said the bullet came from a cal. 22 handgun.

In Cebu, New Year revelers brought to different hospitals due to firecracker blasts and stray bullets have dropped by 30 percent, according to Dr. Junjie Zuasula, the regional epidemiologist of the Department of Health in Central Visayas.

Zuasula said only 57 cases of firecracker blasts were reported by the different hospitals in Cebu during the New Year celebration.

For the Christmas and New Year celebrations from Dec. 21, 2004 to Jan. 1, 2005, Zuasula said there were 134 victims including two stray bullet injuries. He said there were 163 victims, including 6 stray bullet. injuries, reported last year.

Zuasula said the decrease could be attributed to economic hardship and the strict implementation of regulations on the sale of firecrackers.

In Bohol, four people were reported hurt, one of whom lost an index finger and another hurt in the eye.

In Tacloban City, the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center, the region's biggest government-run hospital, reported only seven cases of firecracker-related incidents.

Dr. Deo Obero of the EVRMC said the number was only half of the cases recorded last year. He believed the decline in blast incidents was due to the awareness of the people on the danger of using firecrackers. He said almost all the blast victims had minor injuries.

In Western Visayas, blast injuries initially stood at 37, just about half of the incidents recorded last year. Twenty-five of the incidents were reported in Bacolod City and the rest in Iloilo. *Reports from Allan Macatuno, Tonette Orejas, Carmela Reyes and Cesar Villa, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Leoncio Balbin Jr., Estanislao Caldez, Desiree Caluza, Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Artha Kira Paredes and Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Marlon Ramos, Delfin Mallari Jr. and Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Jhunnex Napallacan, Ma. Diosa Labiste, Joey Gabieta, Nestor Burgos Jr., Carla Gomez and Chito Fuentes, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Negros Oriental gov braces for possible closure of hospitals

By Alex Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—Gov. George Arnaiz has advised the mayors of municipalities and cities in Negros Oriental to strengthen their local health councils to brace for the possible closure of hospitals in the rural areas, should doctors continue to leave their jobs to become nurses in other countries.

In a meeting with the mayors at the Provincial Capitol last Thursday, Arnaiz, however, said that the closure of hospitals would be done as a last resort.

Negros Oriental maintains primary hospitals in the hinterland Barangays of Kalumbuyan in Bayawan City, Barangay Amio in Sta. Catalina town, Barangay Inapoy in Mabinay town, in Barangays Luz-Sikatuna in the boundary of Guihulngan and Isabela towns of the two Negros provinces, in Barangay Nabilog in Tayasan town and in Barangay Pacuan in La Libertad town.

The provincial government also maintains community hospitals in Canlaon City and in Mabinay town and district hospitals in the towns of Guihulngan, Bindoy, Siaton and in the cities of Bais, and Bayawan and the Negros Oriental Provincial Hospital in Dumaguete City.

There are 36 physicians in the various rural health units of the province while 72 physicians serve at the Negros Oriental Provincial Hospital, to include some private consultants.

To help improve the delivery of basic health care services, Arnaiz revealed that the provincial government is preparing a new approach to a family planning program, which will promote natural family planning methods while making available artificial means to couples who desire it.

"We need to do something because health personnel, teachers and schools are lacking because the population is growing," Arnaiz said.

But he stressed that this program, which will not push but merely tell people of the choices available to them, will not be fighting the Roman Catholic Church. The Church has openly declared its opposition to artificial family planning methods.

"We will not force people to embrace family planning but we will educate them on what this is about," Arnaiz assured the mayors, who attended the meeting in full force.

With the reduction of development aid to the Philippines, health officials reported a 70-percent reduction in the supply of birth control pills in the country. In 2006, people will have to buy these supplies by themselves as funding for subsidies would have run out.

The mayors agreed on the need for a family planning program in their localities, as Mayor Valente Yap of Bindoy town argued that the people run to the mayors whenever they have problems and not to anyone else.

Arnaiz said it will not be the purpose of the program to coerce people into submission.

2 Cebu escapees recaptured

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Two prisoners including a controversial drug suspect escaped from the Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center (BBRC) while the guards were busy preparing for the New Year celebration late Friday.

However, drug suspect Roberto Hegremosa was recaptured barely 30 minutes later, while convicted robber Christian Revirra was forced to surrender some three hours to the police.

Hegremosa, 43, of Barrio Luz, this city was the subject of the controversial operation of the National Bureau of Investigation, when it resulted to the strafing incident involving five employees of the Plantation Bay Resort in December 2002 after they were mistaken to be members of the drug group. Hegremosa was finally arrested and jailed on June 24, 2003.

Small hole

Revirra, 20, of Basak San Nicolas here, was arrested on July 21, 2003 for robbery and sentenced to serve four years in prison.

At around 10:30 p.m. on Dec. 31, the two escaped through a small hole they made on the cemented wall of the BBRC. Hegremosa, who was badly bruised after he fell into a drainage canal outside the jail, was recaptured at around 11 p.m. at the Ayala Center area, some 2 km from BBRC.

At around 2 a.m. Saturday, Revirra, surrendered to Vice Mayor Michael Rama, fearing he would be killed by pursuing police.

Rama said he ordered the BBRC oversight committee to investigate the jailbreak. He said Revirra told him that there was no guard at the tower when they escaped, indicating a lapse under the leadership of the new warden, Chief Insp. Teofilo Labating.

Labating said he already ordered the 16 jail personnel on duty, including their supervisor, Senior Insp. Gil Inopia, to explain why they should not be sanctioned for the jailbreak.

AFP version: Kidnapped victim saved, not freed

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza claimed that kidnap victim Dr. Abelrio Canda was rescued, contrary to reports that he was freed by his captors in Sulu.

Braganza said Canda was rescued by Southern Command troops under Joint Task Force Comet at around 9:30 p.m. in Barangay Tando Patong, Maimbung, Sulu on Dec. 30.

But Peter Canda, the victim's cousin, said the physician was abandoned by his captors in Indanan.

"He was rescued after pursuing troops were able to encircle the location of the kidnappers and the victim," Braganza's press statement said.

But Brig. Gen. Agustin Demaala, chief of the 104th Brigade, said none of the abductors was either killed or arrested in the raid.

"They (kidnappers) began to feel the pressure exerted by our troops even before Christmas. As we pinpoint the general location, their movement became restricted, and kidnappers started sending feelers fearing for their own lives," Dema-ala said.

Canda said his abductors were apologetic but could not provide a clear reason for the kidnapping except for a ransom demand. *Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Hopes dim for 22 Pinoys

rom page A1

earch for the missing Filipinos.

"We continue to work. We expect the est despite the circumstances," he said.

Up to 120 Filipinos work in Phuket as usicians and resort employees.

ilipino survivors

The 22 Filipinos on the DFA list of peole believed missing included seven new ames.

Ava Angelica Alora, earlier reported issing, has been accounted for as alive. er father informed the DFA that she had lready returned to Manila, officials said.

Another Filipino, Alvin Bay, was dded to the list of survivors.

The five Filipino fatalities on the DFA lly included Kathryn Joy Lomadilla, ia Jane M. Tuzara, Estelita Sales, Ivy atherine Tomenio-Terasaka and harleen May Ang Tan.

Lomadilla and Tuzara were members f an all-Filipino cultural dance company at performed at the Sofitel Resort Hol on Khao Lak island. Sales, 57, was the roup's dressmaker, officials said.

Tomenio-Terasaka, an alumna of the niversity of the Philippines, and Tan, a iology sophomore at the Ateneo de lanila University, were on a holiday vaation on Phuket. Their remains have een cremated.

The bodies of Lomadilla, Tuzara and ales, which had been picked up by the hai Royal Army from Khao Lak , had yet be claimed by relatives, officials said.

Hopes of finding more survivors in Inonesia's shattered Sumatra island fadd on Sunday.

"There is very little chance of finding rvivors after seven days," said Lamsar ipahutar, the head of Indonesia's search am. "We are about to stop the earch-and-rescue operations. If you surived the earthquake, you probably were illed by tsunami."

eadly diseases

Signs of potentially deadly disease ere beginning to creep up Sunday mong survivors of the tsunamis despite n unprecedented global aid drive which as netted pledges amounting to $2 billion ahead of a summit meeting Thursday in Jakarta on the crisis.

In the ravaged Indonesian province of Aceh, many survivors were suffering from diseases, particularly of the lungs, after the tsunamis swept away the sanitation infrastructure.

The World Health Organization said disease outbreaks were likely due to contaminated water supplies and the destruction of many hospitals.

Diarrhea outbreaks

The WHO said it was seeing growing reports of potentially deadly diarrhea outbreaks in displacement camps in Sri Lanka and India.

"What we need to do is to make sure that we continue to distribute all rehydration salts and treatment for diarrhea and we continue to do our work in sanitation and water supplies," David Nabarro, the top WHO official dealing with humanitarian crises, told reporters in Geneva.

But he added: "It needs a few more days before we can state that we are confident that we've been able to avoid major outbreaks of disease."

The massive scale of the human tragedy remains daunting and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said it could take five to 10 years to reconstruct from the titanic wall of water that tore apart the Indian Ocean coastlines.

Annan, Powell at summit

Annan was invited to attend Thursday's Jakarta summit and UN officials said he had accepted and would issue a world appeal for relief from there, rather than New York. *(See story on Page A1.)*

US Secretary of State Colin Powell, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Australian Prime Minister John Howard are also to attend.

Annan, speaking on the US network ABC, said he had not spoken since the disaster to US President George W. Bush amid speculation of a rift over whether the UN or Washington would spearhead the monumental aid effort.

"I've spoken to other leaders around the world, including the Chinese, and they all want to accept the UN leadership and they want to work with us," Annan said.

AN ELEPHANT searches for the bodies of tsunami victims in Takuapa District, about 130 km north of the Thai resort island of Phuket. Elephants, Thailand's ancient war vehicles, have been brought in to help retrieve decomposing bodies. REUTERS

Seven days after the calamity, a multinational force of aid workers, military aircraft and navy ships was battling nightmarish logistical obstacles to deliver relief goods.

Marines into action

The United States said it would deploy up to 1,500 Marines for tsunami relief in Sri Lanka after hungry survivors swarmed US Navy helicopters which delivered emergency rations to Aceh.

Tropical rains in Aceh, with more than half of the 127,000 known dead, and flooding along Sri Lanka's low-lying coast halted some aid deliveries.

US Navy helicopters, unable to land in tsunami-ravaged Indonesian villages, dropped aid to desperate crowds clamoring for the life-saving parcels.

More than 1 million people in Indonesia, as well as 700,000 in Sri Lanka, will need food aid for months as a result of the disaster, Jan Egeland, the UN emergency relief coordinator told reporters.

Scuffles for food

Aid trickled through to Sri Lanka's battered south but at levels far below what was required. Crucial food shipments were arriving irregularly, sparking scuffles put under control by armed police.

"We need vegetables, we have very, very few vegetables, and this is the main problem we face. And we need vegetable oil, mattresses, pillows, mats, women's underwear, baby powder, feeding bottles, mosquito nets, cups," relief worker Gunasena Gamage said.

Officials said some remote villages might not receive help for a couple of weeks.

Relief from rains

But the tropical rains also delivered relief to survivors, desperate for clean water to avoid diseases which health authorities say could kill tens of thousands.

As hundreds of tons of emergency medicines, food and shelter poured in, airports groaned under the weight of aid and warehouses filled.

The aid jam was worst at Banda Aceh, the Aceh provincial capital. Lack of fuel had hindered aid trucks from reaching the province.

The arrival of the US aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, now anchored off Aceh, significantly boosted aid operations.

Stories of loss, survival

The disaster has touched all corners of the globe—41 countries lost nationals in addition to the 13 countries hit by the tsunami.

The unprecedented relief effort, along with the heartrending stories of loss, rescue and survival, have brought together a world divided over Iraq and terrorism.

Relatives and friends flying to Asia in hope of finding loved ones scoured gruesome photographs of corpses pinned on bulletin boards.

More than 7,800 foreigners are missing, most of them in Thailand's beach resorts.

"Please tell your friends not to come," a tourist policeman urged relatives by loudspeaker at the Phuket town hall rescue center. "The bodies are no longer identifiable."

Thailand drafted elephants to help with heavy lifting, and prisoners to join the stomach-churning task of retrieving the thousands of bodies strewn along its beaches—offering them two days off their sentence for each day worked.

With Inquirer wires

GMA message insensitive to Asian disaster

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cean, that devastated the coasts f 11 countries in South Asia, outheast Asia and as far as frica, killing more than 140,000 eople (as of the latest count, ith the toll expected to rise).

nsensitivity in Manila

Ms Arroyo's New Year's Day mesge stood out for its lack of sensivity to the most tragic natural atastrophe ever to hit the human ice for 50 years. The Asian tsunai hardly merited a mention in the eported version of her message nd assessment of 2004, which did ot fail to note her election in May, espite the immense scale of the isaster in which Filipinos have een reported killed in a tourist rert in Thailand, four of the worstit countries together with Indonea, India and Sri Lanka.

The insensitivity from Manila is furiating, given that the Indian Ocean tsunamis struck while relief from generous international donors was still flowing to Filipino victims. The indifference in Manila is exceeded only by that of US President George W. Bush, who took more than three days after the tsunami disaster before he responded with an offer of condolences and a pledge to aid stricken areas.

Bush on holiday

Bush stayed on holiday at his Texas ranch while thousands were swallowed and swept away by the angry wall of sea. His initial aid offer of $15 million was pathetic compared with the aid response of less wealthy countries.

The invisibility of Bush did not escape notice from United Nations officials who were quick to criticize the rich countries for being "stingy" and who pointed out that the US was quick to spend billions of dollars for its war in Iraq but too slow to respond to a humanitarian disaster.

It was further pointed out that there was a sharp contrast between Bush's tardy response to the tsunami disaster and the almost instantaneous universal response in support of the US following the Sept. 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York.

Bush shamed

Recently, the international criticism shamed Bush into pledging that the US would increase its initial offer to $350 million. It also prompted the US to join a coalition of five countries—including Japan, India and Indonesia—in an international effort to mobilize aid to the victims of the biggest natural disaster in modern history.

The Philippines may not be in a position to donate aid, it being a regular victim of yearly natural disasters, but it could at least send a team of medical workers, larger than the 43-person contingent it had withdrawn from Iraq.

Int'l summit in Indonesia

The opportunity to join the international relief effort comes at the international summit in Indonesia on Thursday, which will launch the worldwide response to the disaster described by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan as an "unprecedented natural catastrophe" that requires an "unprecedented response" from the international community, perhaps more compelling than the response to international terrorism. The 10 members of the Asean, including the Philippines, are participating in the summit.

Foreign policy disaster

The tsunamis were not only a natural disaster but how nations, especially those not hit by them, responded to the catastrophe in humanitarian terms, could also bring foreign policy disaster to countries showing insensitivity to large-scale human suffering. Bush's earlier indifference nearly proved to be a foreign policy and public relations disaster to the US.

A New Year's message could be a harbinger of hope against a background of appalling tragedy. Ms Arroyo used her message to draw a road map for the nation in 2005 rather than inspire hope.

She pledged a new push to improve tax collection, to "take executive action" to "break a culture of corruption," and to pass the 2005 national budget stalled in the 2004 session of Congress.

Passage of the budget is important to support the 10-point agenda she launched on her inauguration on May 30.

The reference to the unpassed budget and new tax measures called attention to the low performance record of the administration in 2004.

The reminder was sharpened by the fact that the President called Congress to a special session on Jan. 5 to 7, a week ahead of the resumption of the regular session of Congress on Jan. 10.

Ms Arroyo wants Congress to pass at least the national budget and the lateral attribution bill (a tax measure) to add to the only tax measure out of the eight urgent revenues enacted into law in 2004—a poor legislative record for six months in office.

Of the eight, only the bill on "sin" taxes (cigarettes and alcoholic products) was passed in Congress despite the fact that the President's coalition gained controlling majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the May election. This political gain in the election seems to have been squandered by the administration with an electoral mandate.

Ham-fisted

Ms Arroyo's call for a special session was both unnecessary and a ham-fisted move to convey the impression that she was charging into the new year with energy to reinvigorate her administration that looked like a spent force after only six months in office.

She failed to consider that there might not be enough quorum by Jan. 5 to pass the budget since members of Congress were just beginning to straggle back to work from the Christmas holiday break and its hangover.

Estrada stands 2 inches taller with replaced knees

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omorrow, as he passed the 4-hour critical post-operative eriod Saturday night and was ell on the way to recovery, his octors said.

"He has started to move his nee one at a time," said Estrada's S-based doctor Christopher low, who examined the newly eplaced" knees.

"He was happy to see his legs ove," said Mow, explaining that was "standard practice" in the S to make a patient move a new- replaced knee a day after the peration.

Mow, a Stanford University linical assistant professor who as been Estrada's orthopedic sureon since 1998, was unable to perate on Estrada after failing to btain a temporary license from long Kong medical authorities.

The operation was done last riday at the Hong Kong Advenst Hospital by a team headed by r. Julian Chang, Mow's Hong ong-based associate.

"Mr. Estrada was happy to have one the operation," Mow said.

-month recovery

He said Estrada would be able to tand up in the next few days, but it would take more than three months of recovery and therapy before he can walk normally again.

Estrada's Filipino doctor, Lorenzo Jocson, said the doctors might try to make Estrada stand up on Tuesday or Wednesday.

"He has passed the critical 24-hour period and he can now move his legs although it's so painful for him to do so," Jocson said, adding that the danger during the 24-hour period was for infection to set in on any of the legs.

"Medically speaking, without the pain, everything is okay," said Jocson, who flew with Estrada to Hong Kong on Dec. 27.

Jocson said Estrada was still very much in pain and had been given morphine. He was also being encouraged to sleep so as not to feel the pain.

The former president, he said, underwent a "pulmonary therapy" procedure and was found to be "all right" insofar as his blood pressure or lungs were concerned.

He said Estrada's legs had not been fitted with braces but only with "elastic bandages."

Moral support

The patient's son, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, said his father was always complaining about the pain. He said it was clear the pain killers were not having any effect.

"All his children and grandchildren are here to give him moral support," the young Estrada said.

Apart from Jinggoy, also around are his mother, Sen. Loi Ejercito, and siblings Jacqueline Lopez and Jude Estrada. Jinggoy and Jackie came with their spouses and children.

Estrada's children by former starlet Laarni Enriquez have also been here.

Jinggoy said that upon waking up on Saturday morning, the first thing that Estrada did was to ask for his family.

At 4 p.m. on Saturday, he was allowed to have his first full meal consisting of pizza and spare ribs.

Towards evening, Jinggoy said he ate *pancit* and *kangkong* ordered from a Chinese restaurant.

Mow was set to return to the US last night and Jocson will leave for Manila today.

Angry doctors, patients

The presence of the "superstar patient" has started to get on the nerves of doctors and fellow patients at the exclusive Hong Kong Adventist Hospital.

Journalists from the Philippines have been barred from entering the lobby or any of the four rooms rented by Estrada at the hospital following the Dec. 31 operation.

The reporters, who were fighting off the extreme cold, tried to linger at the hospital lobby but hospital guards threatened to throw them out of there and into the front garden.

"They want you to do the interviews there in the garden. The doctors here are complaining about your presence and the numerous visitors of your superstar patient," said one security guard.

Chilliest New Year in 43 years

Hong Kong experienced its chilliest New Year's Day in 43 years last Saturday, with the temperature dropping to 6.4 Celsius.

Hospital staff stopped the ABS-CBN television network from beaming a video feedback to the country minutes before the weekend news.

"I'm sorry, we're only following orders. The doctors and some patients are angry at you and your former President because his relatives and friends are using the parking slots for doctors. They tell us: 'Even if they are VIPs, they are just patients. We are doctors here,'" another guard quoted the doctor as saying.

GMA to attend Asean . . .

From page A1

Also expected to attend are United States Secretary of State Colin Powell, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark.

Bunye said the emergency Asean leaders' meeting, to be held on Thursday, would be hosted by Indonesia, the country which sustained the most damage and most number of casualties from the catastrophe that hit 11 nations in South Asia and Africa on Dec. 26.

Asean groups the 10 Southeast Asian nations.

Coordinate response to crisis

Bunye said the President might depart for Jakarta on Wednesday for the one-day meeting, the first international meeting of heads of state to respond to the disaster.

He said the meeting was proposed by Jakarta and seconded by Singapore.

The agenda of the meeting was to "coordinate international response to the crisis," which has killed up to 140,000 people, including more than 80,000 in Indonesia alone.

Bunye said the Asean leaders discussed the special meeting with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan who is also attending the meeting.

The meeting is also reportedly meant to prepare a regional plan for mitigating such disasters but Bunye could not confirm this.

Bunye also said the Philippines was making a "modest contribution" to the affected countries by way of a forensic team from the National Bureau of Investigation which was set to depart last night for Thailand.

He said the 8-member team is composed of Dr. Didagel Pagulayan as team head with members known only as Dr. Sombilon, Dr. Kalalo, Dr. Tierra, Mrs. Magsipoc, Mrs. Rosales, Mr. Donozo and Mr. Bacud.

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Editor **Ester G. Dipasupil** ■ *Assistant Editor* **Cenon B. Bibe**

Holidays produce 12,000 tons of garbage

By Ruth L. Navarra

THE HOLIDAYS have proven to be a messy affair.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando said that after the Christmas and New Year's celebration, the volume of garbage has increased to twice its normal volume.

"On an average day, we would collect a of total of 6,000 tons of garbage," Fernando said. "But after Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, it has doubled to about 12,000 tons."

He noted that much of the increase in garbage volume was from marketplaces around the metropolis.

MMDA General Manager Robert Nacianceno attributed the doubling of the volume to the number of parties held during the season.

Filipinos, especially Catholics, celebrate the traditional Noche Buena for Christmas and Media Noche for the New Year.

These, coupled with the scores of Christmas parties and other celebrations, produced the huge mounds of solid waste.

Little things like boxes of ham, wrappers of Queso de Bola and fruitcakes, the wrappers used for gifts, and the leftover of firecracker casings used during the New Year celebration contributed to the mess.

Fernando said the absence of street sweepers, who went on holiday break, could also be a factor.

"The parties are over and it is time to clean up the mess," said Nacianceno. "We are asking everyone to cooperate with the cleanup. They should take the cleaning process into their own hands because the local government could only do so much."

Nacianceno said that for the meantime, everyone should not bring their garbage out on the street because scavengers would only go through them and scattering them all over.

He also asked people who live near drainage canals, rivers and esteros not to throw spent firecracker casings into the water because it could further contaminate the waterways.

Local governments are in charge of the cleanup of their respective localities, Fernando said, but added that the MMDA would help out.

"We are deploying 1,000 metro aides all over Manila to sweep and collect garbage," he said.

Collected trash will be taken to the respective dumps used by local governments, while those to be collected by the MMDA will go to the Rodriguez, Rizal, landfill.

Manila requires businesses to display new license plates

By Tarra V. Quismundo

NEW YEAR, new rules.

Starting today, businessmen and professionals in Manila renewing their permits will be required to avail of license plates which they will have to display at their shops or offices.

The business plates will show that administrators of a shop or office have gotten their permits and have paid the required dues.

"This is meant to regulate businesses, and to curb the practice of corrupt city inspectors who extort from legitimate businessmen," majority floor leader Ernesto Dionisio told the INQUIRER.

He added that the business plates would also allow the city to earn additional revenue from traders and service providers.

Revenue will come from the sale of the metal plates, which come in the size of regular motor vehicle license plates.

The introduction of the plates are embodied in the Business Registration Plate Ordinance passed by the City Council during a special session on Dec. 29.

Dionisio explained that the issuance of business plates had long been the practice in other cities in Metro Manila.

Under the ordinance, commercial establishments and professionals having offices in Manila will have to display the plates in their places of business.

Fees for the plates vary depending on the type of enterprise.

For first class hotels, clubs, music or sing-along lounges, and first class restaurants, the fee will be P3,000; motels, banks, travel and recruitment or promotion agencies, P2,000; while beer houses, second-class restaurants, manufacturing firms and money changers should pay P1,000.

A fee of P500 will be required from import or export firms, real estate lease firms, wholesale or retail shops, and general merchandise stores and security agencies.

Smaller businesses like tailoring and dress shops, barber shops, bakeries and photo studios will also have to pay P500.

Even sari-sari stores, eateries, canteens, fast food chains and refreshment stands will have to pay a fee worth P300.

Each business registration plate will bear an alphanumeric code and a validation sticker, which will cost P60 upon renewal every year for three years.

Dionisio said the license plates would be difficult to duplicate, as these would be made of imported pre-coated GI (galvanized iron) sheets.

The alphanumeric registration code will be embossed and the plates will bear the logo or seal of the city.

The City Council appropriated P6 million for the implementation of the system.

City Hall's Business Promotion and Development Office will begin implementing it today as the period for renewing business permits starts. It will last for the entire month of January.

Dionisio said those found without the business license plates beyond January would be fined between P1,000 to P5,000, or serve jail time of between one to six months.

Ex-BI agent milks wrong cow

By Christian V. Esguerra

DE GUZMAN

THE 'COW' mooed and he got nabbed.

Cesar de Guzman, a former confidential agent of the Bureau of Immigration, was arrested on New Year's Eve for allegedly extorting from a foreigner who had reportedly been overstaying in the country.

The alien, whom the former BI agent allegedly tried to used as a milking cow, had cried foul and alerted authorities.

De Guzman tried to extort P500,000 from Jimmy Go, a businessman who also went by the name "Mr. Gaisano," said Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez.

De Guzman allegedly demanded the amount unless Go wanted to be deported.

But, Fernandez said, Go had long been set for deportation for overstaying. He was arrested by immigration officers in San Juan in November.

But even if Go himself had run afoul of the law, Fernandez said de Guzman had no business extorting money from him.

"There was no way he (Go) could be released because his deportation had already been affirmed," the BI commissioner told reporters in a press conference in Camp Crame.

In the first place, de Guzman's contract as an confidential immigration agent had already expired by the time he made contact with the businessman.

De Guzman allegedly asked Go to initially pay him P25,000 cash and the payoff was set on New Year's Eve at the University of Santo Tomas, where Go was confined for alleged chest pains and low potassium.

At about 5 p.m. that day, agents of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response team flagged down de Guzman's Starex van shortly after he received the P25,000 marked money from Go's maid.

Aside from the amount, police found in de Guzman's possession a 9-mm pistol, a mobile phone and immigration identification cards.

De Guzman has been charged with extortion and illegal possession of firearms.

Romeo Aguila y Zara; 53

ROMEO Zara Aguila passed away peacefully on Dec 30.

He is survived by his wife, Venus; children Kristine Hazel, Karen Joy, Jeizel, Jeilani, Dawn Suzette and Joko Miguel; sister Violeta Panaligan and brother-in-law Bernardo Panaligan.

Interment will on Jan. 4 at the Lipa Catholic Cemetery, Lipa City in Batangas after a noon Holy Mass.

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12 cops shoot, miss suspect; 1 killed

By Ruth L. Navarra

POLICEMEN in Taguig City either need shooting practice or need to consult an occultist.

On Saturday night, 11 local lawmen engaged a lone suspect in a gun battle that later baffled investigators.

Although the suspect was slain, police also lost one of their own in the one-sided fight.

According to police, Guillermo Corpuz, 25, barged into a 7-Eleven Convenience Store on Gen. Santos Avenue, Lower Bicutan, at about 10:30 p.m. and grabbed the gun of the lone watchman.

After successfully grappling for the .38-caliber revolver, Corpuz shot the guard, who was hit in the abdomen.

Corpuz then ran across the street to another 7-Eleven store and tried to grab the gun of that outlet's security guard.

However, he ran into the store when SPO1 Ranillo Balallo and PO3 Willy Jang quickly responded.

The suspect hid in the store as more policemen, armed with M-16 assault rifles and 9-mm pistols arrived.

Minutes later, Corpuz emerged from the store and tried to shoot his way through the policemen.

Lawmen returned fire and guns blazed.

Curiously, not one of the bullets hit Corpuz, who managed to get close to Bulallo whom he then shot at close range.

Before getting hit in the left side of the neck, Bulallo was also shooting at Corpuz using an M-16.

Emma Galero, Taguig Scene of the Crime Operations team head, later expressed surprise and bewilderment.

She said all 12 policemen were aiming for Corpuz but apparently missed.

"In all my years as a law enforcer, I have never seen anything like it," Galero said referring to the incident.

Corpuz was only stopped dead on his tracks when Insp. Gerald Dec, opened fire with an assault rifle and hit the suspect once in the belly.

Galero said it was impossible for Bulallo to miss Corpuz because the policeman was only a foot away from the suspect.

"It was as if Corpuz was immune to the bullets directed at him," said Galero.

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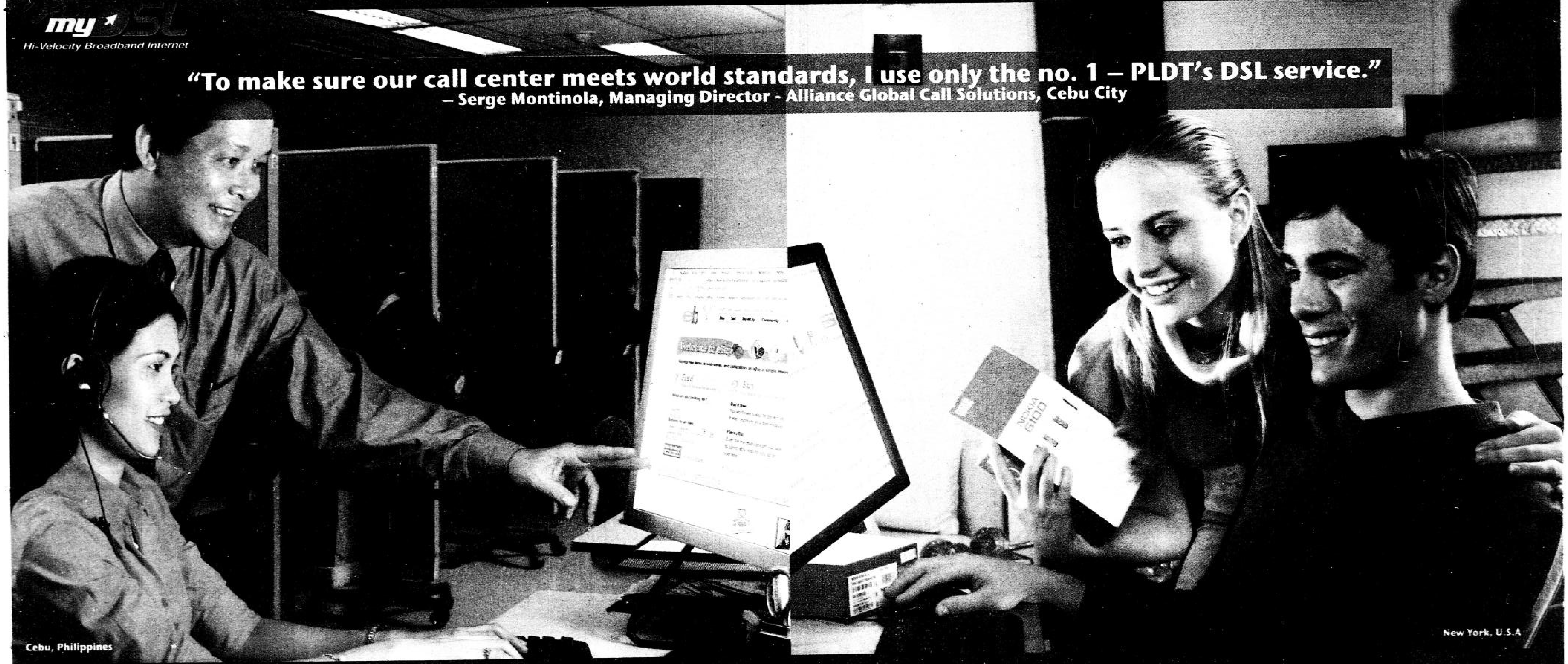

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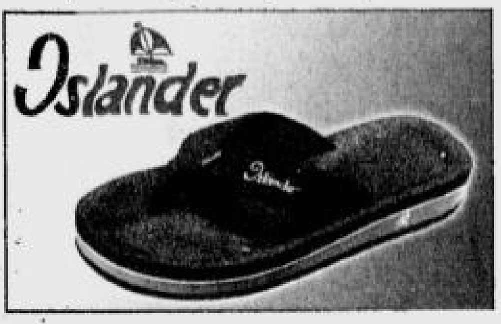
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PSA inducts four more greats to Hall of Fame

DE VEGA-MERCADO: Once Asia's fastest woman

CARLOS Loyzaga, Lauro Mumar, Lydia De Vega-Mercado and Mona Sulaiman. Four giant names in Philippine sports. Each one a legend in his or her own right.

They'll share the same stage on Jan. 13 as the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) enshrine them to the Hall of Fame for their outstanding achievements during their time.

The four are among the top achievers to be honored by the country's oldest media organization in its Annual Awards Night at the Manila Pavilion next week.

Golf star Jennifer Rosales and ring sensation Manny Pacquiao, named Sportswoman and Sportsman of the Year, respectively, lead the short honor roll list compiled by the sportswriting fraternity for the compact, 90-minute affair sponsored by Red Bull, Agfa Colors, Photokina, Pagcor, San Miguel Beer, the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), Accel and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza. NBN-4 is the official carrying station.

Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco has been invited as guest of honor in the program that starts at 7:30 p.m.

Loyzaga, Mumar, De Vega-Mercado and Sulaiman are the latest batch of former greats to be inducted by the PSA to the Hall of Fame, an award the body institutionalized last year.

Golf legends Celestino Tugot and Ben Arda were the first two named to the Hall of Fame.

LOYZAGA

Long before the rise of pampered, millionaire basketball players, Loyzaga and Mumar were already there. Their brilliant partnership helped the Philippines become a cage power in both Asia and the world.

The two were teammates in the RP team that won the basketball golds in the 1951 (New Delhi) and 1954 (Manila) Asian Games.

But perhaps their greatest moments together came in 1954 when they steered the country to a third-place finish in the World Basketball Championship in Rio de Janeiro, the highest achieved by any Asian country in the meet. The feat remains unsurpassed until now.

Mumar, nicknamed "The Fox" for his wily plays, was team captain of that legendary team that included Francisco Rabat, Mariano Tolentino, Benjamin Francisco, among others.

Mumar also played in the 1948 London Olympics where the Philippines placed 12th.

Considered as the greatest basketball player the country ever produced, the 73-year-old Loyzaga, nicknamed "The Big Difference," was chosen as member of the Mythical Five during that memorable 1954 World Championship stint.

He was team captain of the RP squad that won four straight Asian Games basketball golds from 1951 to 1962. Likewise, he led the team to back-to-back ABC championships in 1960 and 1963. He was coach of the 1967 Filipino team that won the title.

A two-time Olympian, Loyzaga was at the helm of the country's best showing in the quadrennial meet, a seventh-place finish in the 1956 Melbourne Games.

Over at the track, De Vega was the undisputed darling of the crowd, her colorful yet controversial career the subject of passionate stories in major sports pages during her time.

Blessed with long legs, her hair pony-tailed, the charming lass from Meycauayan, Bulacan, won numerous races in both the Southeast Asian and Asian levels during her reign as the country's top runner.

Diay, as the runner was known, also was a two-time Olympian, having carried the country's colors in the 1984 (Los Angeles) and 1988 (Seoul) Olympics.

But what really defined her career as one of the greatest Filipino athletes of all time was her claim to being Asia's fastest woman, a feat she established by winning back-to-back the century dash gold during the 1982 (New Delhi) and 1986 (Seoul) Asian Games.

Named PSA Athlete of the Year in 1981, '86 and '87, the 40-year-old De Vega has branched out to other fields since hanging her sneakers. She was once a councilor in Meycauayan and serves as sports consultant to Bulacan's local government.

Two decades before Lydia's ascension in the realm of Philippine sports, there was Mona Sulaiman.

Sulaiman distinguished herself as the fastest woman in Asia in the early '60s when she won three gold medals in the 1962 Asiad in Jakarta, Indonesia.

She rewrote the records in winning the 100-meter dash, added the 200-meter title and later combined with Inocencia Solis, Aida Molinos and Francisca Sanopal in winning the women's 4x100-meter race. Sulaiman also bagged a bronze in the shotput during that memorable Asiad.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Heat claim 14th straight win /A18

■ Parica shines in California /A19

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Bondad on target for Open defense

By Musong R. Castillo

FRANCES Bondad is enjoying the country, seeing places—the malls, especially—before plunging into serious work for her defense of the Philippine Ladies' Amateur Open championship.

Since arriving Wednesday last week, the 17-year-old has not touched her golf clubs. Instead, she has made up for lost time with relatives who have treated her to feasts of traditional Filipino cuisine.

She actually left her golf set in Australia, refusing to spend A$300 (about P13,000) for excess baggage weight. Her mom, Juliet, is taking care of the golf clubs and will fly in this afternoon.

The holidays officially end today for Frances, who will play practice rounds at the Manila Golf Club starting tomorrow courtesy of DHL Philippines owner Rod Feliciano.

Golf patron-businessman Antonio Arevalo will take care of Bondad's expenses leading to the Open and anticipates a strong performance from the defending champion.

The Open has lured the country's finest players and some of the best from neighboring Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

World Amateur veteran Jayvie Agojo leads the homegrown bets together with Puerto Rico teammates Lora Roberto and Anya Tanpinco.

BONDAD

Frances will stay in the country until the end of February and plans to join as many tournaments as she can. Her mom, meanwhile, will try to sort out the papers so Frances can finally secure a Philippine passport.

Frances said she prepared long and hard for the Open while in Australia. And because her personal trainer would not let her lift weights, she went into cycling and swimming to put on extra pounds.

The Open champ now hits the driver to between the 260- and 270-yard range and works extra time on her putting and short game.

Frances is coming off a victory in the New South Wales Champion of Champions event last November, shooting a tournament-record 144 total in the 36-hole tournament on rounds of two-over 75 and 69.

Heavy rains marred the first round of the tournament which drew all the lady club champions in Australia.

IM Gonzales loses anew

INTERNATIONAL Master Jayson Gonzales suffered another loss and this time in the hands of Fide Master Robert Eames of England in the fourth round of the 80th Hastings International Chess Congress Saturday in Hastings, England.

The 33-year-old Gonzales, the lone Filipino entry in the meet, is seeking a second Grandmaster norm and won his two early matches against Ronald Harman and Roger Patterson of England before losing to 18-year-old GM Mark Bluvshtein of Canada in the third round.

Gonzales next faces American Raymond Kaufmann. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Paragua laments GM title impasse

By Marlon Bernardino
Contributor

DESPITE five grandmaster norms tucked under his belt—two more than what's required by the world chess federation, Fide—International Master Mark Paragua is having serious doubts about receiving the title anytime soon.

Player-friends of the 20-year-old Paragua believe very influential forces in and out of local chess are out to sabotage his claim to the GM title.

Paragua, the country's highest ELO-rated player at 2586 who won or tied for first in three international tournaments last year, declined to identify the people behind what his friends describe as an "orchestrated maneuver" to deny him of the rank.

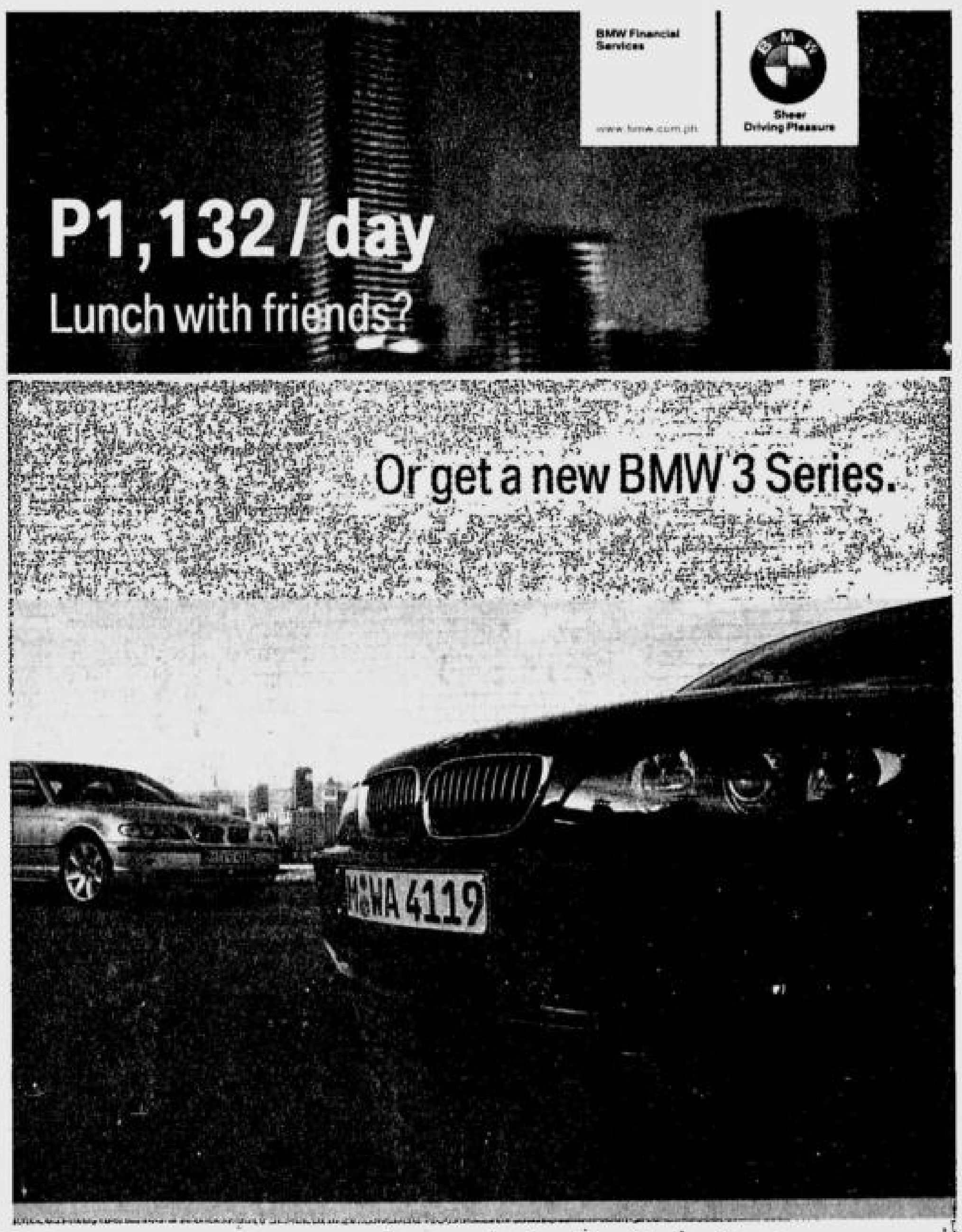
"I hope it comes soon, but if it doesn't, I will still continue playing," he said.

Paragua won twice and placed second once in three straight tournaments in Alushta, Ukraine, before emerging as co-champion in the Singapore Open recently.

But the soft-spoken resident of Marilao, Bulacan, lamented the delay in the conferment of the GM title, despite assurances by Casto Abundo Jr., the Filipino ratings chief and webmaster of Fide, that his name would be included in the GM roll this month.

Paragua returned from the World Chess Olympiad in Spain last November, where the Philippine team finished a fighting 12th,

PARAGUA/ A18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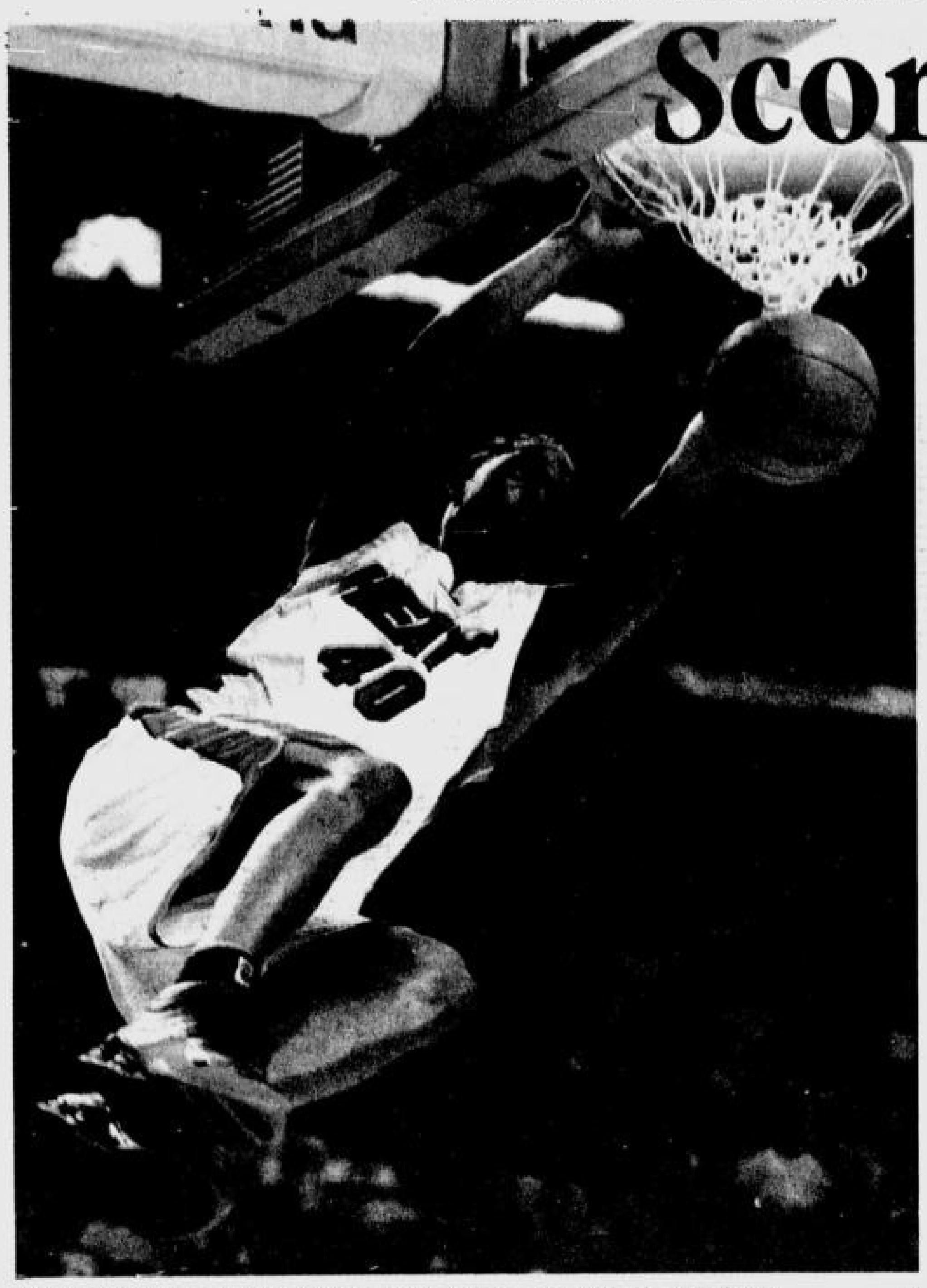
Scorching Heat claim 14th straight win



MIAMI Heat forward Udonis Haslem slams one home vs the Charlotte Bobcats. AP

MIAMI—Dwyane Wade used an array of dunks and a spectacular blind over-the-shoulder flip to score 26 points and lead the Miami Heat to their 14th straight win, 113-90, Saturday night over the Charlotte Bobcats.

Wade made 11 of 16 shots and added nine assists for the Heat, who have the NBA's longest winning streak this season. Miami turned the game into a blowout with a 27-12 third-quarter burst.

Shaquille O'Neal added 16 points for Miami (25-7), which had all five starters score in double figures and moved 6 1/2 games ahead of Cleveland for the Eastern Conference's best record.

Emeka Okafor had his 19th straight double-double—17 points and 10 rebounds—for Charlotte, which also got 14 points from Jason Hart but lost its fifth straight.

Nets 93, Knicks 87

In New York, Jason Kidd had the pass of the night, an off-the-backboard, alley-oop feed that Vince Carter dunked, and New Jersey defeated New York and its self-proclaimed "best point guard in the NBA."

Kidd didn't outplay counterpart Stephon Marbury, who made that declaration.

Marbury had 31 points, eight assists and four rebounds to Kidd's 13 points, three assists and four rebounds, but the Nets led throughout the final three quarters and beat their cross-river rivals for the 17th time in 20 meetings.

Carter had 16 points, five assists and six rebounds, while Richard Jefferson had 17, six boards and four assists.

Nazr Mohammed added 18 points and 13 rebounds for the Knicks, who had their three-game winning streak snapped.

Grizzlies 104, T'wolves 95

In Minneapolis, Pau Gasol scored 23 points and Earl Watson added 20 to lead Memphis to a come-from-behind victory.

Watson shot 7-for-10 and 5-for-5 from 3-point range for Memphis, which trailed by 15 points in the first half.

Fellow reserve Bonzi Wells added 18 points as Memphis won its third straight and for the sixth time in eight games.

Kevin Garnett had 30 points and 10 rebounds for Minnesota, which has lost four of five. Wally Szczerbiak scored 22 points, Latrell Sprewell added 17, and Sam Cassell had 10 assists but only four points.

In Chicago, Eddy Curry scored 22 points and Kirk Hinrich added 18 points and nine assists, leading Chicago over Orlando.

Grant Hill scored 16 points for Orlando, which lost its third straight overall and fifth consecutive on the road. Steve Francis finished with 12 points on 3-for-12 shooting, and Dwight Howard had 10 points and 12 rebounds.

The Bulls erased an early seven-point deficit with a 19-2 run in a five-minute span of the first quarter. Curry scored 11 points in the opening period and Hinrich added eight points.

Trail Blazers 97, Warriors 88

In Portland, Oregon, Shareef Abdur-Rahim had 26 points and nine rebounds to help Portland rally to beat Golden State and snap the Warriors' four-game winning streak.

Both teams were beset by key injuries. Golden State guard Jason Richardson, Portland forward Zach Randolph and center Theo Ratliff all sat out.

The Warriors built a 14-point lead in the second half, but Damon Stoudamire capped a Portland comeback with two consecutive 3-pointers to tie it at 71. The Blazers got another Stoudamire 3 to tie it again, then went ahead 78-76 on rookie Sebastian Telfair's layup.

Troy Murphy led the Warriors with 19 points and 17 rebounds. AP

Hewitt returns to hometown Adelaide

ADELAIDE, Australia—Lleyton Hewitt, who won his first senior title at the Australian men's hardcourt championships at the age of 18, is back for another attempt at the title after not playing at Memorial Drive for three years.

Hewitt, who has represented Australia in the Hopman Cup at Perth during that time, says he is in strong form ahead of his hometown tournament that begins Monday. It's one of nine tournaments in Australia over the next two weeks leading into the Australian Open beginning Jan. 17.

"I always wanted to come back and play here," Hewitt, 23, said Sunday. "It's obviously where it all started for me.

"I had given the Hopman Cup a run the last few years, and I just felt like to get a real tournament under my belt, where there's ranking points on the line and you have got to go out there and win every match to get match practice."

Sweden's Joachim Johansson and Thomas Enqvist, German Nicolas Keifer, Americans Taylor Dent and Robby Ginepri and Australians Todd Reid and Wayne Arthurs are also entered at Adelaide.

"He's a very dangerous player," Hewitt, who plays a qualifier in the first round, said of Johansson. "He's No. 12 in the world now, he's got a huge game, he's dangerous." AP

HEWITT

Coming soon, Olympic bid debate on TV

NEW YORK—The first TV debate in Olympic bid history might be coming soon.

What a riveting concept! What a thrill! Five guys with cities to sell.

Imagine the folks trying to bring the 2012 Summer Games to New York, London, Paris, Madrid and Moscow going toe-to-toe, the not-so-mighty dollar up against the pound, euro and ruble. Watch them peddle dreamy visions of stadiums and villages to be built with billions in public funds.

Unlike in the past, when all the hard-selling, soft-selling and buying of International Olympic Committee votes were done in secrecy, this part of the revamped process could be headed to your living room in late January. It's a concept concocted by BBC and embraced by bidders because it's free publicity for them, even if it's all a bit hokey.

Ground rules

The ground rules laid down by IOC president Jacques Rogge ban bid leaders from attacking their rivals. That means, for example, Parisian officials can't zing New York's security again.

The IOC's 11-member evaluation commission, which is supposed to do its utmost to avoid graft—or at least to avoid getting caught—is visiting Madrid, London and New York in February, Paris and Moscow in March. The panel will give its recommendations to the 100-plus IOC members a month before they vote by secret ballot.

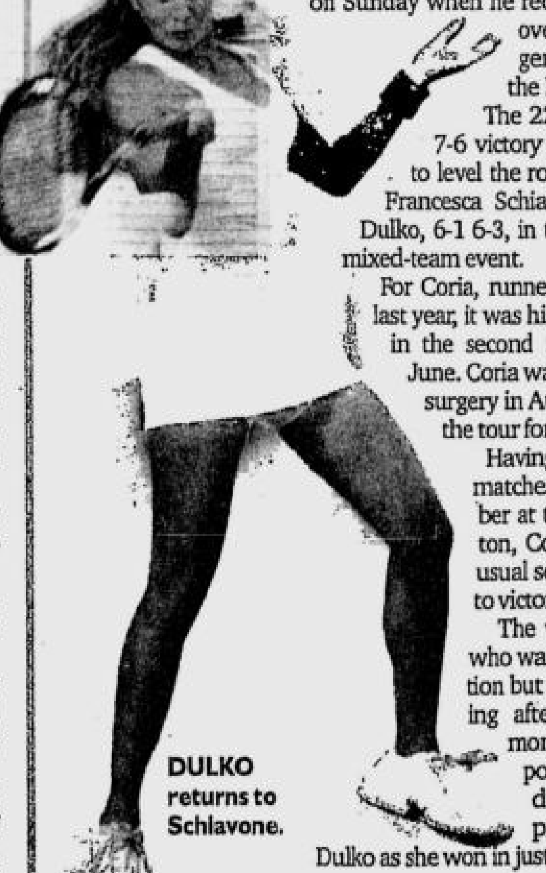
As London 2012 spokesman Michael Lee said, "It's good to have an open and friendly airing of this important debate."

Of course, with billions on the line, a few barbs might slip in between the friendly banter. Let the mudslinging begin.

We can guess what New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg or deputy mayor and 2012 bid leader Dan Doctoroff might want to say:

"New York will have it all—stadiums and arenas, an athletes' village with views of Manhattan, top-notch security, and the energy of the world's most vibrant city. AP

Hopman Cup helps Coria slay demons



DULKO returns to Schiavone.

PERTH—Guillermo Coria exorcised a few ghosts on Sunday when he recorded his first victory in over six months to pull Argentina level with Italy in the Hopman Cup.

The 22-year-old eased to a 6-1 7-6 victory over Davide Sanguinetti to level the round-robin tie at 1-1 after Francesca Schiavone had beaten Gisela Dulko, 6-1 6-3, in the opening match of the mixed-team event.

For Coria, runner-up at the French Open last year, it was his first victory since he lost in the second round of Wimbledon in June. Coria was forced to have shoulder surgery in August, which kept him off the tour for four months.

Having lost all three of his matches on his return in November at the Masters Cup in Houston, Coria looked more like his usual self on Sunday as he eased to victory against Sanguinetti.

The win was sweet for Coria, who was due to join the 2002 edition but was prevented from playing after he received a seven-month ban for returning a positive drugs test for nandrolone. Earlier, Schiavone proved too steady for Dulko as she won in just over one hour. *Reuters*

How Pacquiao fell for Darlington socks

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

GOOD socks could've made him the clear winner.

Manny Pacquiao swore that, given a better pair, he could've stopped the durable and deliberate Juan Manuel Marquez of Mexico in their first fight that ended in a draw last May.

Well, we've heard Pacquiao tell the whole world how a pair of cheap, thin, unreliable socks had made him develop painful toe blisters during that bout.

That costly boo-boo should singly be blamed on poor, inept management.

It indeed sounded very insignificant, petty.

The good thing about Pacquiao is that he played it like a true gentleman.

He has refused to bare the brand of socks which, he alleged, had cost him victory.

***

He instead turned that sorry experience in Las Vegas into instant easy money.

He agreed to sell socks to his countless fans.

He did a commercial for the Darlington brand.

He vouched that, given that darling pair, he would've won.

It was a cute, very effective commercial.

It was indeed a great sales coup for those who conceptualized it.

In fact, the ploy must've been a tremendous success that, last heard of, Pacquiao has refused to leave early and train in California.

Pacquiao is scheduled to shoot a new Darlington commercial tomorrow.

***

We don't know how that new commercial would go.

Of course, it would also be interesting to check later whether Pacquiao would indeed be putting on the Darlington pair in his scheduled rematch against Marquez.

Meanwhile, Marquez, described as a fitness freak, is well on his third month of intensive training.

After having hit peak form, Marquez is scheduled to start sparring this week.

Needless to say, that gives the sharp, peppery Mexican master counter-puncher a tremendous edge over Pacquiao.

***

Darlington people could've helped by skipping the commercial shoot until Pacquiao has returned from the Marquez rematch?

Who knows? Maybe Pacquiao feels he must pay a debt of gratitude.

If not, why did he agree to postpone training hard under Freddie Roach just to help sell his darling brand?

Or was the talent fee dangled by Darlington too huge to resist?

As things stand for Pacquiao now, the poor guy is left to play catch-up against Marquez.

All for the sake of sincerely selling the Darlington brand.

You know what?

This thing about the Darlington commercial shoot was supposed to be under wraps.

For the record, Freddie Roach had advised Pacquiao to leave immediately after Christmas to train hard at the Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood.

Pacquiao refused.

Next, the fighter's lovely wife, Jinkee, who celebrates her birthday on Jan. 11, asked Pacquiao to leave for LA last Dec. 28.

Pacquiao also turned her down.

Pacquiao said he would definitely leave on Jan. 5.

***

Anyway, when Pacquiao next decided to move that departure to Jan. 8, one nosy boxing man started to feel uneasy.

Ronnie Nathanielsz, trusted Team Pacquiao insider, sniffed around.

He asked Pacquiao pointblank and was told by the boxing superstar that he would not leave on the fifth of January because he considered No. 5 unlucky.

That itself turned out to be a ploy.

Naturally, the veteran broadcaster lost his cool and nearly got knocked out after learning the truth.

Nathanielsz could not help but curse when he next learned that Pacquiao decided to stay behind to just fulfill his commitment and appear in the Darlington commercial.

***

Somebody has got to warn Pacquiao that it would be a tougher, perfectly prepared Marquez he would be meeting.

Roach is right. It will be a tactical war.

Needless to say, the man with the better equipment should enjoy a built-in edge.

The best weapon Pacquiao had utilized last time was his power.

After having downed Marquez three times, Pacquiao was thoroughly reduced into a predictable, single-paced fighter.

Pacquiao later claimed he had hurt his left hand early, although he was observed delivering hefty left punches until the final round.

Pacquiao also got stalled and was limited to moving side to side, instead of onward.

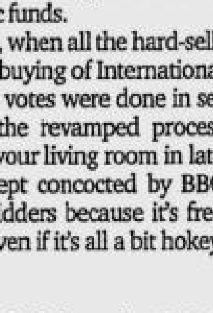
He blamed this on the toe blisters, caused by cheap, inferior pair of socks.

Based on his behavior and late schedule, Pacquiao is obviously convinced it would all be a question of socks when he fights Marquez the second time.

It will not.

Paragua laments GM title impasse

From page A17



PARAGUA

without the GM title, also despite Fide's earlier pledge that he would be conferred the title there.

Abundo, in a subsequent talk with top officials of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP), said the Fide was only waiting for the official communication of results from tournament organizers in Alushta.

Abundo once served as the chief lieutenant of Florencio Campomanes, the Filipino president and later president-emeritus of Fide whose clout in the international chess community has remained considerable.

A source in local chess said Campomanes once crossed swords with Paragua's father, Ric, for not heeding his advice on how the player should best pit his talents in international tournaments.

Campomanes was also said to have been angered by Ric Paragua's insistence to enter his son in European tournaments where chances of earning a GM norm were close to nil owing to the dearth of top-flight GMs.

Player-friends of the young Paragua likened Mark's case to that of GM Rogelio Barcenilla, who they said was punished by certain chess officials for openly siding with the defunct Philippine Chess Federation in its feud with then newly born NCFP.

Barcenilla earned his final GM norm in the Marshall chess tournament, organized by the famous New York Chess Club in New York State, but the Fide later rescinded the norm system which the club had used for years.

The Paraguas and the NCFP also rejected reports describing the three-tournament Alushta series as some sort of GM title mill.

An official of the NCFP noted that Alushta has churned out dozens of GM gems.

GM Sergey Karjakin, an Alushta alumnus, is the world's youngest grandmaster at 12 years and 7 months. He owns the distinction of being the official second, at the age of 11, to GM Ruslan Ponomariov when the latter won the Fide championship in 2002.

Karjakin won his second GM norm at Alushta.

PSA-Red Bull tie-up alive in 2005

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

FOR THE last 11 years, Red Bull/Agfa Colors and the Philippine Sportswriters Association have combined to give recognition to the country's sports achievers through the annual PSA Awards Night at the Manila Pavilion.

On Thursday, Jan. 13, Red Bull and Agfa Colors, two sports-oriented products distributed by PBA franchisee Photokina, will again join efforts with the PSA when it honors the top athletes of 2004 headed by golfer Jennifer Rosales and boxer Manny Pacquiao, who were voted Sportswoman and Sportsman of the Year, respectively.

Since 1994, Red Bull/Agfa Colors and the PSA have built a long-running relationship which is expected to continue through the years despite the hard and trying times. Red Bull, by the way, also supports the PSA Forum, a weekly program which brings into focus the sports issues of the day.

"We are happy with our relationship with the PSA and we value this tie-up," said Red Bull team owner George Chua. "It's always been a great honor to be part of a big occasion honoring the Filipino athletes who made the country proud last year."

The annual PSA Awards Night and the weekly PSA Forum are two key public-service projects of the sportswriters, two sports programs which would be difficult to sustain without the support of the private sector. In the past, the PSA had difficulty raising the funds to stage the annual dinner and the weekly forum, but that problem was solved during my terms as the PSA president from 1994 to 1997 when Photokina started footing the bill for the awards night, including paying for the trophies and part of the television coverage. Since then, this benevolent gesture has been extended to the association under colleagues Ding Marcelo of the Bulletin, Lito Tacujan of the Philippine Star, Bert Cuevas of the Manila Standard and now Malaya's Jimmy Cantor.

***

THE RIGHT MAN TO HEAD PSC. Just like the other prospects, I do not know Arnold "Ali" Atienza personally, but Ali's impressive record deepens my respect for him. In my view, Ali, a former Asian taekwondo champion and world-ranked jin, could very well be the right man to replace Eric Buhain as chair of the Philippine Sports Commission.

Now the youngest prospect at 32, Ali, son of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, strikes one as being thoroughly honest, approachable and confident. And his manners are good.

But his greatest asset, aside from his youth and energy, is his common touch. He is not flashy nor witty, but he is utterly convincing when he talks about sports.

As chief of the Manila Sports Council, Ali, who took up taekwondo at the young age of 11, said he has already prepared the city's plans and programs for 2005 for the benefit of the youth in their quest for athletic excellence. He bared that Masco is presently establishing linkages with other local government sports councils for a partnership aimed at discovering and training new talents in line with the government's sports development program for the youth.

"We also envision a bigger manila Youth Games this year," said the Masco chief.

Parica shines in California

FILIPINOS Jose "Amang" Parica of Manila and Santos Sambajon opened their bids on a high note after winning their respective matches at the start of the 95-man field Pechauer West Coast Tour at the Hard Times Billiards Bellflower in California, USA, over the weekend.

PARICA: On track

The California-based Parica, who will be celebrating his 56th birthday this coming April, drew a bye in the first round and then blanked Catfish Lewis, 7-0, in the second. In the next round, he is slated to meet Fach Garcia, who scored victories over Nate Palma (7-2), and Eric Ewing (7-6).

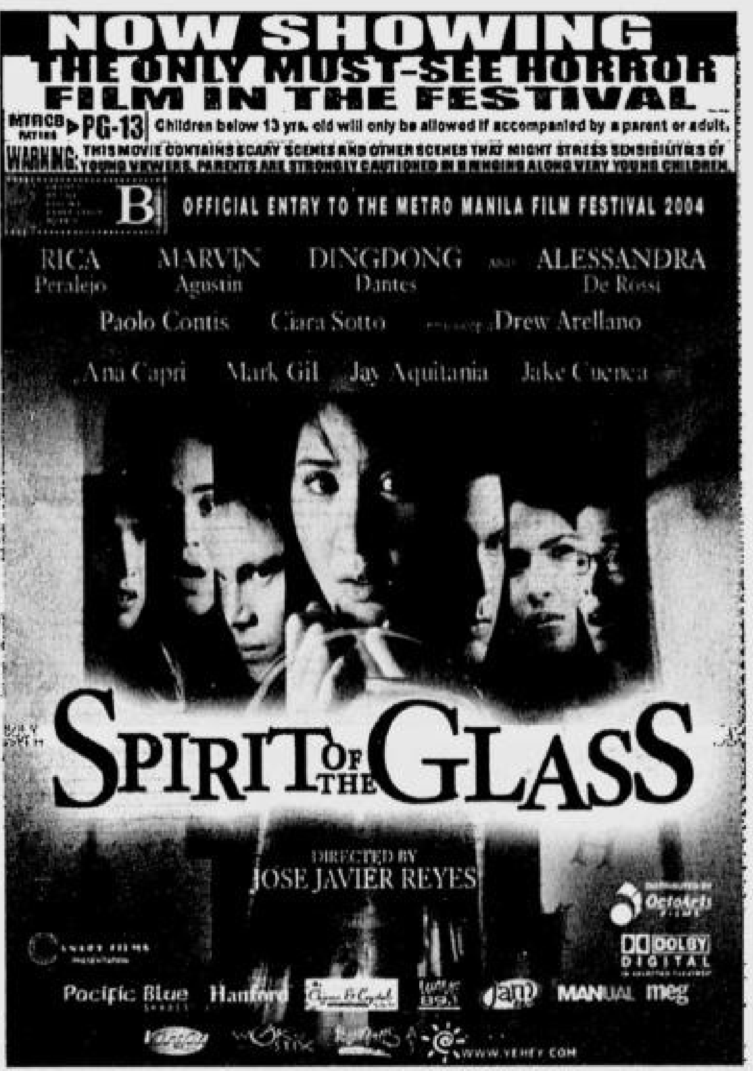
Sambajon, 46, fashioned twin 7-4 triumphs over Paul Juarez and Victor Castillo to forge a duel against American Corey Harper in the next round.

Meanwhile, Parica, Efren "Bata" Reyes, Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan and Francisco "Django" Bustamante will be seen in action in The United Pool Players Association Pro Tour Championship on Jan. 4-9 at The Bicycle Casino in Bell Gardens, California.

Sixty-four players, including a stellar cast of international 9-ball superstars, will be vying for over $50,000 in prize money in this prestigious event, including 2001 World Pool Cardiff ruler Mika "The Mighty" Immonen of Finland. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Roligon 'Rumble' slated

THE ROLIGON Mega Cockpit starts 2005 with a bang with the staging of the Rumble 4-Cock Ulutan-Timbangan Derby. Nine 2-cock eliminations will be held on Jan. 6, 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 20, 22 and 23. Elimination entry fee is P2,200 with a minimum bet requirement of P2,200. The championship is set on Jan. 26 wherein qualifiers will have to put P1,100 as additional entry fee. Minimum bet is P3,300. Meanwhile, it's all systems go for the P300,000 Filcobra 4-Cock Derby on Jan. 12. Interested parties may call Roligon office for details.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RICA Peralejo MARVIN Agustin DINGDONG Dantes AND ALESSANDRA De Rossi
Paolo Contis Ciara Sotto Drew Arellano
Ana Capri Mark Gil Jay Aquitania Jake Cuenca
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DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES
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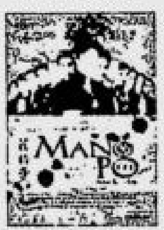
SO HAPPY TOGETHER

LATIKMAN


MANO PO

SIGAW

SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

PANAGHOY SA SUBA

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SIGAW
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 MANO PO 3
6 ENTENG KABISOTE

sm city marilao
1 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO 3
4 ENTENG KABISOTE

sm city baguio
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 LSTIKMAN
3 AISHITE IMASU 1941
4 SIGAW

sm city bacoor
1 AISHITE IMASU 1941
2 SIGAW
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
5 LASTIKMAN
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
7 MANO PO 3
8 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

sm city batangas
1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

sm city dasmariñas
1 SIGAW
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MANO PO 3

sm city lucena
1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 MANO PO 3
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 LASTIKMAN
4 AISHITE IMASU 1941
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
6 SIGAW
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

sm city iloilo
1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 RESERVED
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 LASTIKMAN
6 MANO PO 3
7 RESERVED
8 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

sm city davao
1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 LASTIKMAN
5 AISHITE IMASU 1941
6 PANAGHOYSA SUBA

sm city cagayan de oro
1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

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SAMPLE COMPUTATION

BRAND	MARKET VALUE	REGULAR PRICE	30% OFF	BLOWOUT PRICE
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2002 Honda Civic VTi M/T	560,000.00	19,233.00	5,770.00	13,463.00
2002 Honda CRV A/T	760,000.00	18,409.00	5,523.00	12,886.00
2003 Toyota Corolla GLi M/T	545,000.00	18,754.00	5,626.00	13,128.00
2004 Toyota Corolla Altis J M/T	655,000.00	22,262.00	6,679.00	15,583.00
2004 Toyota Revo SR M/T	830,000.00	19,954.00	5,986.20	13,968.00
2002 Mitsubishi Lancer GLXi A/T	490,000.00	17,001.00	5,100.00	11,901.00
2003 Mitsubishi Adventure Sport	645,000.00	15,869.68	4,760.90	11,108.77
2003 Mitsubishi Pajero A/T	1,200,000.00	28,073.00	8,422.00	19,651.00
1999 Nissan Exalta M/T	360,000.00	12,855.00	3,857.00	8,999.00
1999 Nissan Frontier 4x4 A/T	535,000.00	13,319.00	3,996.00	9,323.00
2000 Nissan Patrol 3.0 4x4 A/T	1,200,000.00	28,073.00	8,422.00	19,651.00
2003 Isuzu Trooper DSL 3.2	995,000.00	23,597.00	7,079.00	16,518.00

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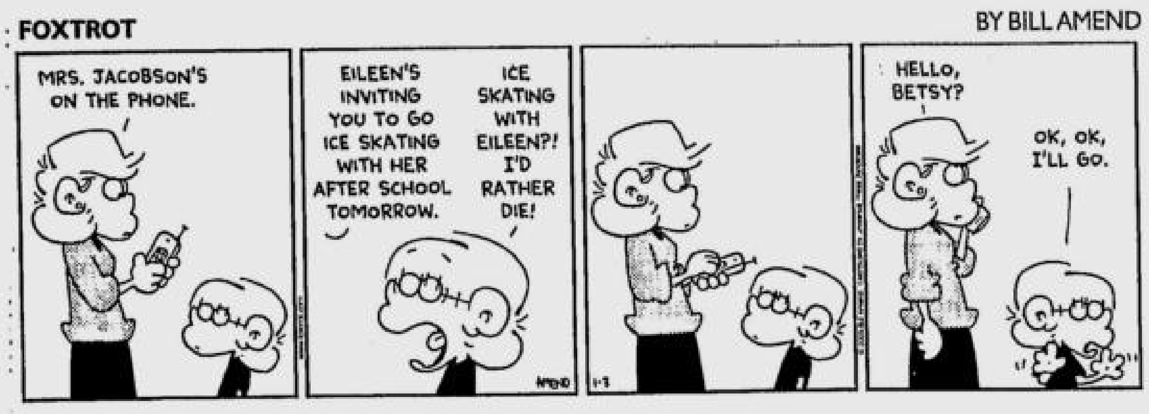
SPURS VS KINGS
JAN.3 | 7:30 PM

JAN.6 PHOENIX @ HOUSTON	7:30 PM
JAN. 9 INDIANA @ DALLAS	10:00 AM

MONDAYS, THURSDAYS AND SUNDAYS
NBA RADIO
CELTICS VS PISTONS
7:00 AM LIVE
BLAZIN'

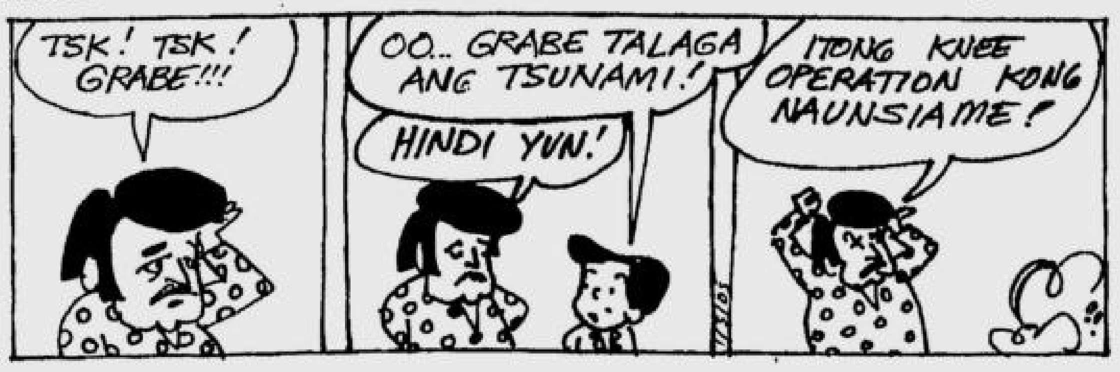
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


MRS. JACOBSON'S ON THE PHONE.
EILEEN'S INVITING YOU TO GO ICE SKATING WITH HER AFTER SCHOOL TOMORROW.
ICE SKATING WITH EILEEN?! I'D RATHER DIE!
HELLO, BETSY?
OK, OK, I'LL GO.

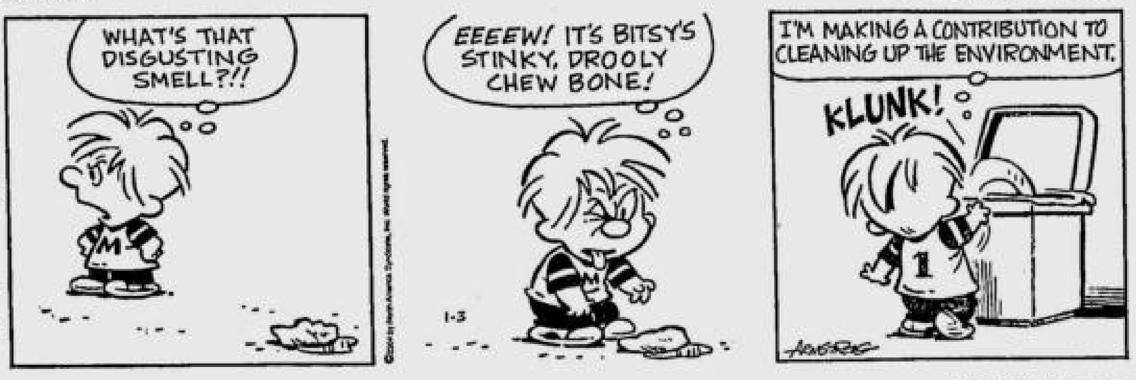
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


TSK! TSK! GRABE!!!
OO... GRABE TALAGA ANG TSUNAMI!
HINDI YUN!
ITONG KNEE OPERATION KONG NAUNSIAME!

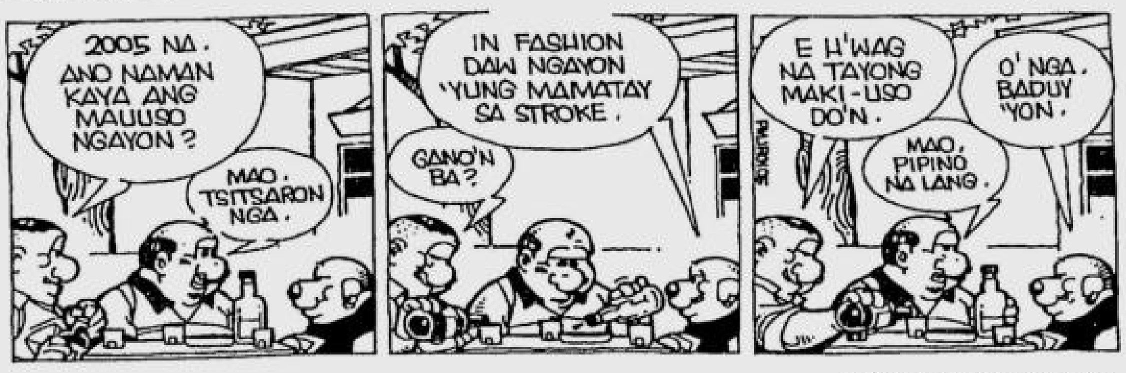
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


WHAT'S THAT DISGUSTING SMELL?!!
EEEEW! IT'S BITSY'S STINKY, DROOLY CHEW BONE!
I'M MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO CLEANING UP THE ENVIRONMENT.
KLUNK!

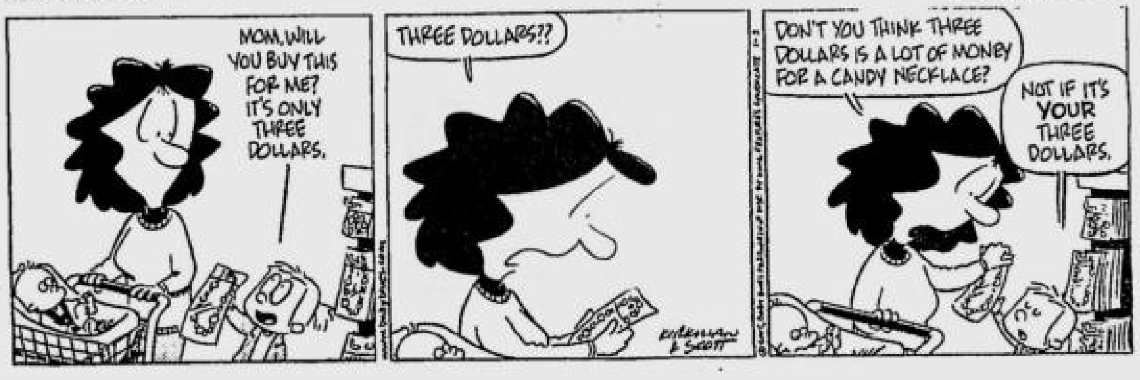
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


2005 NA. ANO NAMAN KAYA ANG MAUUSO NGAYON?
MAO. TSITSARON NGA.
IN FASHION DAW NGAYON 'YUNG MAMATAY SA STROKE.
GANO'N BA?
E H'WAG NA TAYONG MAKI-USO DO'N.
O' NGA. BADUY 'YON.
MAO, PIPINO NA LANG.

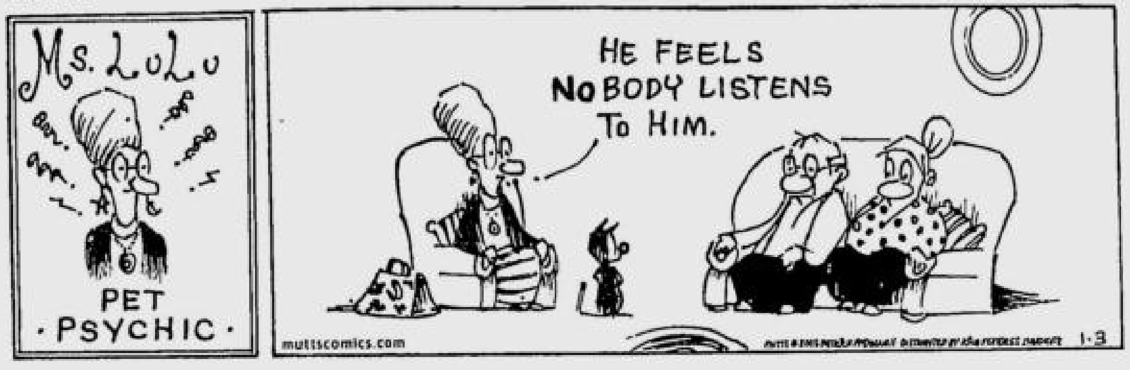
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


MOM, WILL YOU BUY THIS FOR ME? IT'S ONLY THREE DOLLARS.
THREE DOLLARS??
DON'T YOU THINK THREE DOLLARS IS A LOT OF MONEY FOR A CANDY NECKLACE?
NOT IF IT'S YOUR THREE DOLLARS.

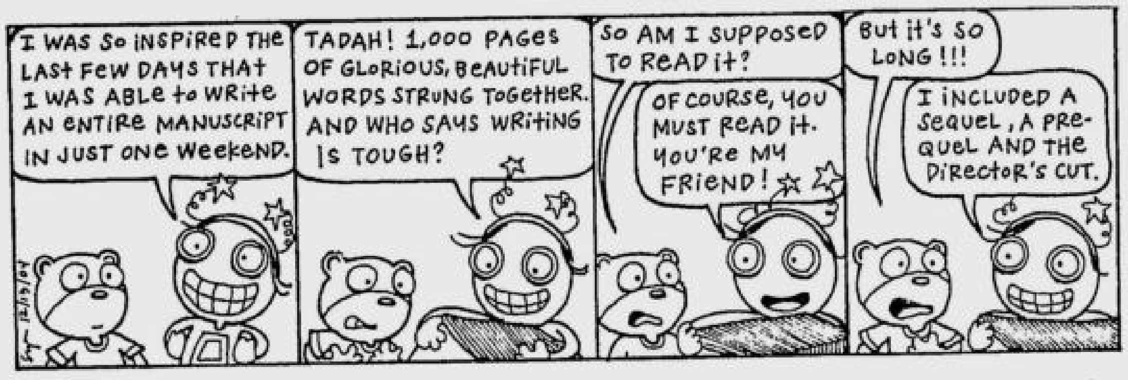
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


Ms. LuLu
PET PSYCHIC
HE FEELS NOBODY LISTENS TO HIM.
muttscomics.com
1-3

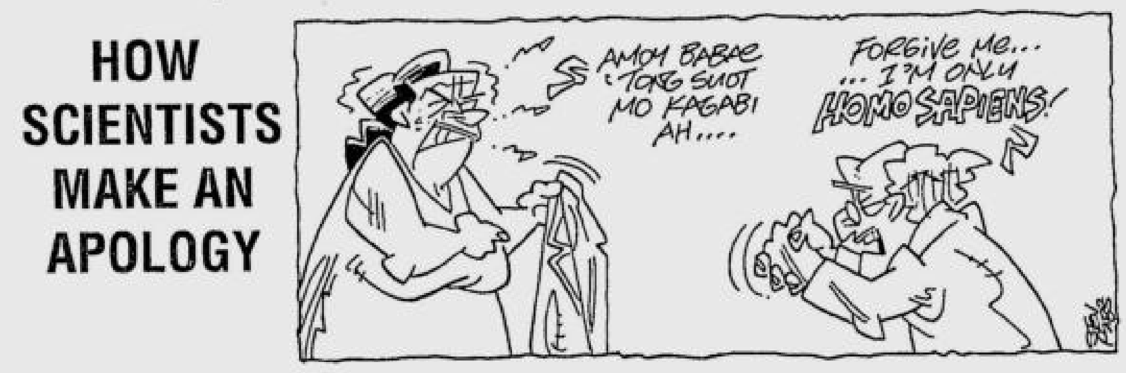
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I WAS SO INSPIRED THE LAST FEW DAYS THAT I WAS ABLE TO WRITE AN ENTIRE MANUSCRIPT IN JUST ONE WEEKEND.
TADAH! 1,000 PAGES OF GLORIOUS, BEAUTIFUL WORDS STRUNG TOGETHER. AND WHO SAYS WRITING IS TOUGH?
SO AM I SUPPOSED TO READ IT?
OF COURSE, YOU MUST READ IT. YOU'RE MY FRIEND!
BUT IT'S SO LONG!!!
I INCLUDED A SEQUEL, A PREQUEL AND THE DIRECTOR'S CUT.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


HOW SCIENTISTS MAKE AN APOLOGY
AMOY BABAE 'TONG SUOT MO KAGABI AH....
FORGIVE ME... ...I'M ONLY HOMO SAPIENS!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Despite your cavalier mask, you're a serious person. Once convinced about something, you commit 100 percent to it. (Some view this as stubbornness.) You have a strong will, and can be very persuasive. Your research skills are amazing because you have dogged determination. This year focuses on your closest partnerships.

Birthdate of: J.R.R. Tolkien, writer; Mel Gibson, actor; Bobby Hull, hockey player.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Your primary objective this year is still to solidify your home base. This has consumed you for almost two years now, but it is necessary.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a watershed year for you. Ever since 1999, you've been reinventing yourself. (You're not who you were in 1995.) Now you are the new you.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You love change. In the next two years, you will have a residential move or a job change. Somehow, your daily surroundings will be different.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): While you improve your real estate this year, on the other hand, you're wondering how to earn money. At a deeper level, you're wondering, What really matters in life?

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You've been giving up and letting go of things for some time now. Now your moment of truth has arrived. By the end of this year, you'll be in a new sandbox.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This year expands your life in many ways. Not only will you earn more money, but you will deepen your ties and responsibilities with groups and friends.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Things are still wonderfully powerful for your sign; however, this year is even better than last (by a long shot). You see now what is working and what is not. Trust this.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You are approaching a career peak in your life. It is a time of culmination or graduation. This year and next, you will reap the rewards of seeds planted in the past.

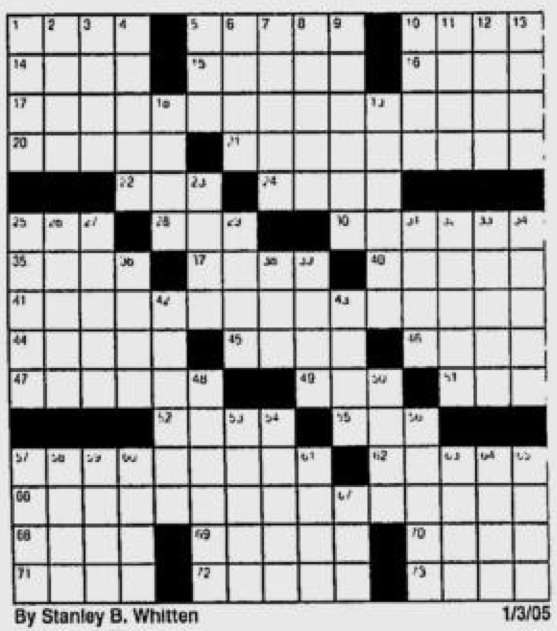
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Recently you dealt with loss and learned to get along with less from partners and other sources. This has strengthened you. That's why you will make the most of your own career this year.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Ever since 2003, you've been out of the gate and running. Your bolder approach to life has taxed some partnerships. New opportunities will change your world this year.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You've been working very hard. You will continue to work hard this year; however, by the autumn, your rewards will be at hand. Expect recognition then!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Increased responsibilities with children are inevitable now. However, you want to find out what you really want to do in life. How can you sing your song?

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Stanley B. Whitten
Highwood, IL
1/3/05

ACROSS
1 Lima's nation
5 Attack from all sides
10 Bog fuel
14 Norse Zeus
15 University of Maine town
16 Edison's middle name
17 In ring number one...
20 Step
21 Certain fishermen
22 Vigor
24 Unit of loudness
25 Leaky PA reactor
28 Grippe
30 Worldwide
35 Diva Ponselle
37 Cleveland's lake
40 Insect stage
41 In ring number two...
44 Courtyards
45 Excessive drinkers
46 Incline
47 Fails to
49 Forum farewell
51 Rel. figures
52 Soft drink
55 Arafat's grp.
57 Ess skiing?
62 Debate
66 In ring number three...
68 McCowen or Baldwin
69 Close, in poetry
70 Scholar of Islamic law
71 Sandy hill
72 Savor
73 Hamilton bills

DOWN
1 Pans' companion
2 Blue-pencil
3 Latvian capital
4 Not with it
5 Part of NYC
6 Cupid
7 2nd-year students
8 January in Juarez
9 Dragging behind
10 Insect's feeler
11 Sommer of filmdom
12 Declare
13 Old sailors
18 Not kosher
19 Earhart of aviation
23 Appeal
25 Tire track
26 Very Italian
27 French river
29 Samovars
31 Leave out
32 Deadly poisons
33 Delegate
34 Ladies' men
36 Sacred bull
38 OJ trial judge
39 Kett of old comics
42 "Weird" singers
43 Invitation abbr.
48 Male tabby
50 Verve
53 Paul Anka hit
54 Meara and Bancroft
56 Planetary course
57 Herring's cousin
58 One of a kind
59 Last word, perhaps
60 Curtain material
61 No-see-um
63 Willing
64 __ Bator, Mongolia
65 "Desire Under the __"
67 Mine find

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

S	I	E	V	E	S	■	B	R	O	A	D	E	S	T
E	N	R	I	C	H	■	A	I	R	L	I	N	E	R
S	H	E	I	L	A	■	N	O	B	I	L	I	T	Y
T	A	M	■	A	R	E	N	T	■	Z	E	S	T	S
E	L	I	S	I	O	N	S	■	H	A	M	L	E	T
R	E	T	U	R	N	S	■	F	O	R	M	E	R	S
C	R	E	E	■	■	U	T	O	P	I	A	■	■	■
E	S	S	■	S	A	R	A	C	E	N	■	C	L	I
■	■	■	H	I	R	E	R	S	■	■	G	R	I	N
S	A	B	I	N	E	S	■	L	A	C	I	E	S	T
C	U	R	T	I	S	■	D	E	L	E	G	A	T	E
A	B	U	T	S	■	H	I	S	K	Y	■	T	E	G
M	U	N	I	T	I	O	N	■	A	L	P	I	N	E
P	R	E	T	E	N	S	E	■	L	O	U	V	E	R
I	N	T	E	R	N	E	D	■	I	N	T	E	R	S

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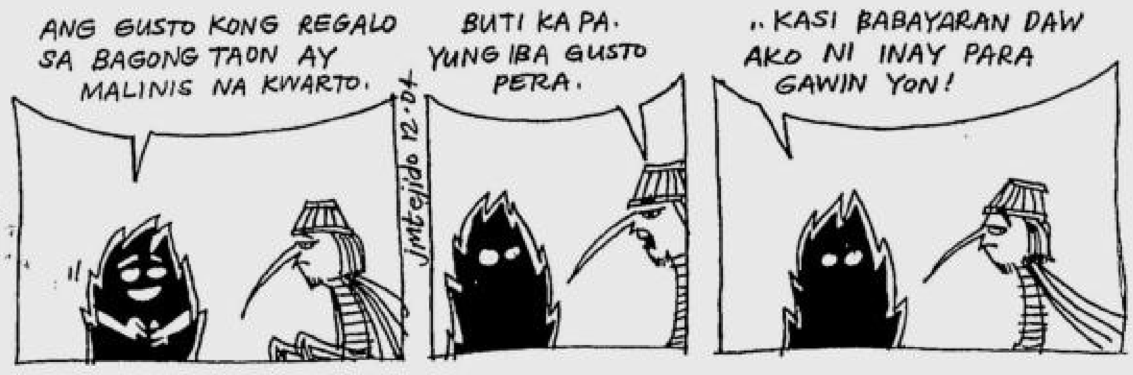
1/3/05

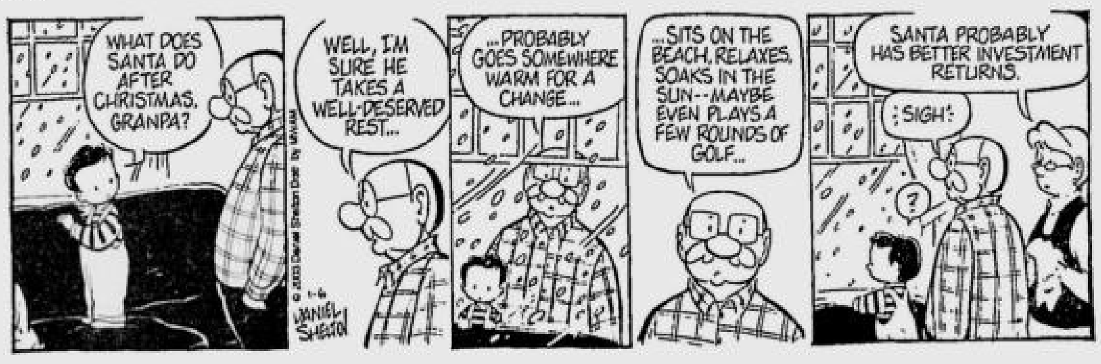
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANG GUSTO KONG REGALO SA BAGONG TAON AY MALINIS NA KWARTO.
BUTI KA PA. YUNG IBA GUSTO PERA.
..KASI BABAYARAN DAW AKO NI INAY PARA GAWIN YON!
jmtejido 12.04

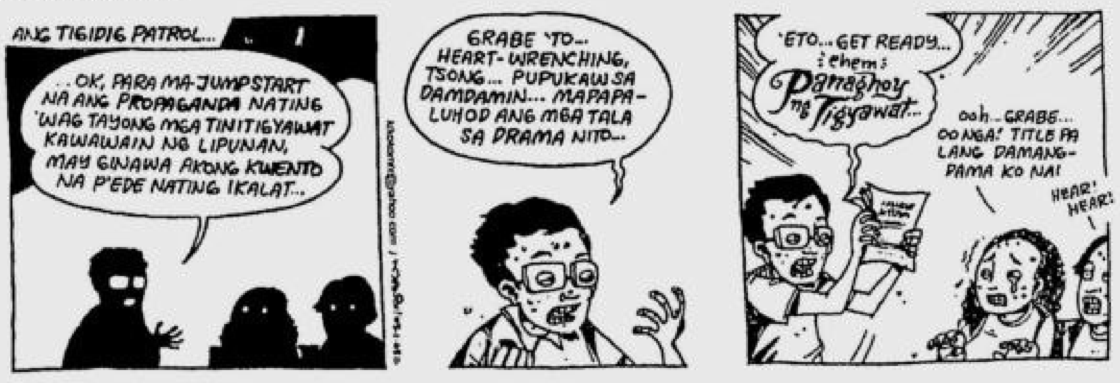
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WHAT DOES SANTA DO AFTER CHRISTMAS, GRANPA?
WELL, I'M SURE HE TAKES A WELL-DESERVED REST...
...PROBABLY GOES SOMEWHERE WARM FOR A CHANGE...
...SITS ON THE BEACH, RELAXES, SOAKS IN THE SUN--MAYBE EVEN PLAYS A FEW ROUNDS OF GOLF...
SANTA PROBABLY HAS BETTER INVESTMENT RETURNS.
:SIGH:
?

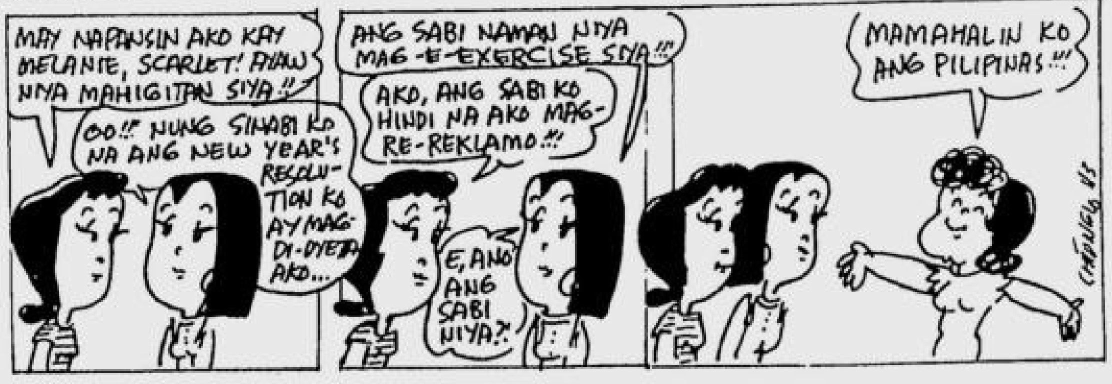
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


ANG TIGIDIG PATROL...
..OK, PARA MA-JUMPSTART NA ANG PROPAGANDA NATING 'WAG TAYONG MGA TINITIGYAWAT KAWAWAIN NG LIPUNAN, MAY GINAWA AKONG KWENTO NA P'EDE NATING IKALAT...
GRABE 'TO... HEART-WRENCHING, TSONG... PUPUKAW SA DAMDAMIN... MAPAPA-LUHOD ANG MGA TALA SA DRAMA NITO...
'ETO... GET READY... :ehem: Pamaghoy ng Tigyawat...
ooh...GRABE... OO NGA! TITLE PA LANG DAMANG-PAMA KO NA!
HEAR! HEAR!

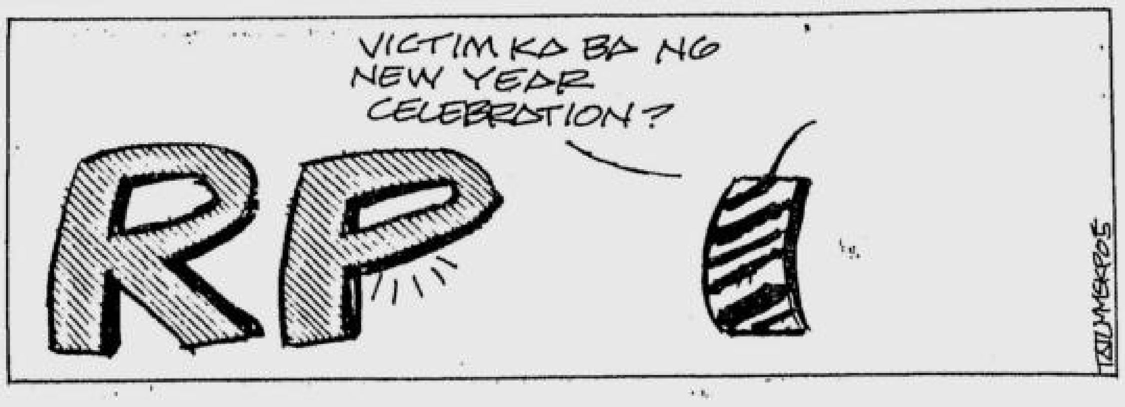
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MAY NAPANSIN AKO KAY MELANIE, SCARLET! AYAW NIYA MAHIGITAN SIYA!!
OO!! NUNG SINABI KO NA ANG NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION KO AY MAG-DI-DYETA AKO...
ANG SABI NAMAN NIYA MAG-E-EXERCISE SIYA!!
AKO, ANG SABI KO HINDI NA AKO MAG-RE-REKLAMO!!
E, ANO ANG SABI NIYA?
MAMAHALIN KO ANG PILIPINAS!!
CHIONGLO 05

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


VICTIM KA BA NG NEW YEAR CELEBRATION?
RP

MTRCB . . .

From page A24

had promised her that no more violations would be committed.

Willie's third

Soriano, however, contested his show's three-month suspension before the Supreme Court. He said the censors body violated his constitutional rights to free religion, speech and expression.

TV host Willie Revillame was kicked out of the noontime show "Masayang Tanghali Bayan" on ABS-CBN in January. The network's decision to terminate Revillame's talent contract was prompted by an MTRCB complaint about his double-meaning jokes.

It was Revillame's third time to be punished for vulgar behavior.

Aside from "MTB," shows like "Diretsahan" on ABC 5, "Game KNB?" on ABS-CBN and the now-defunct "Victim" also on ABS-CBN were among the programs that received warnings from the MTRCB for violating the parental guidance classification on TV.

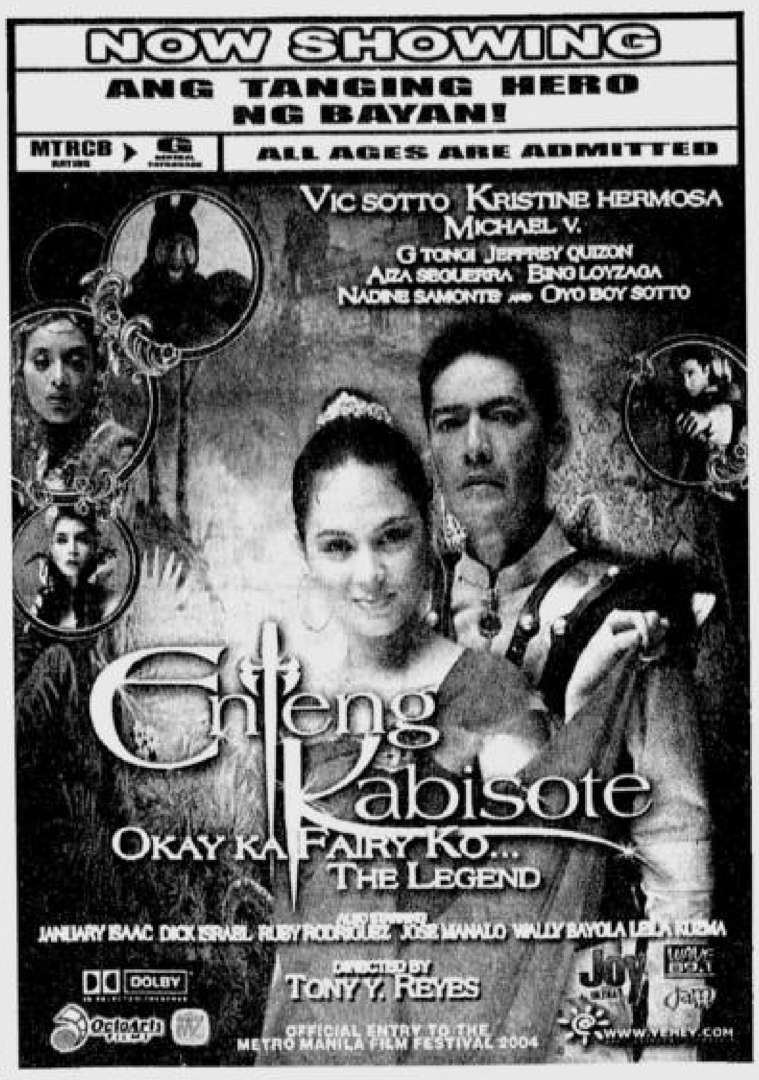
Can't please everyone

Laguardia became the subject of a complaint herself. In July, MTRCB board member Msgr. Nico Bautista had called for her immediate replacement for "graft and corruption, immorality and misuse of funds."

Bautista and another board member, Benjamin Bernales, accused Laguardia of illegal disbursement of funds. Laguardia called their allegations "malicious and baseless."

In October, Malacañang announced that it had formally accepted Laguardia's resignation as MTRCB chair. The next day, Malacañang backtracked on its announcement, saying the letter telling Laguardia of President Macapagal-Arroyo's acceptance of the resignation she had submitted earlier was unauthorized.

The MTRCB chair has this to say: "You can't please everyone, no matter what you do. It's really a thankless job. I try to maintain moderation in all the things I decide on. I try not to be too liberal or too conservative, but to strike a balance between the two."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VIC SOTTO KRISTINE HERMOSA
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G TONGI JEFFREY QUIZON
AIZA SEGUERRA BINO LOYZAGA
NADINE SAMONTE AND OYO BOY SOTTO
Enteng Kabisote
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE LEGEND
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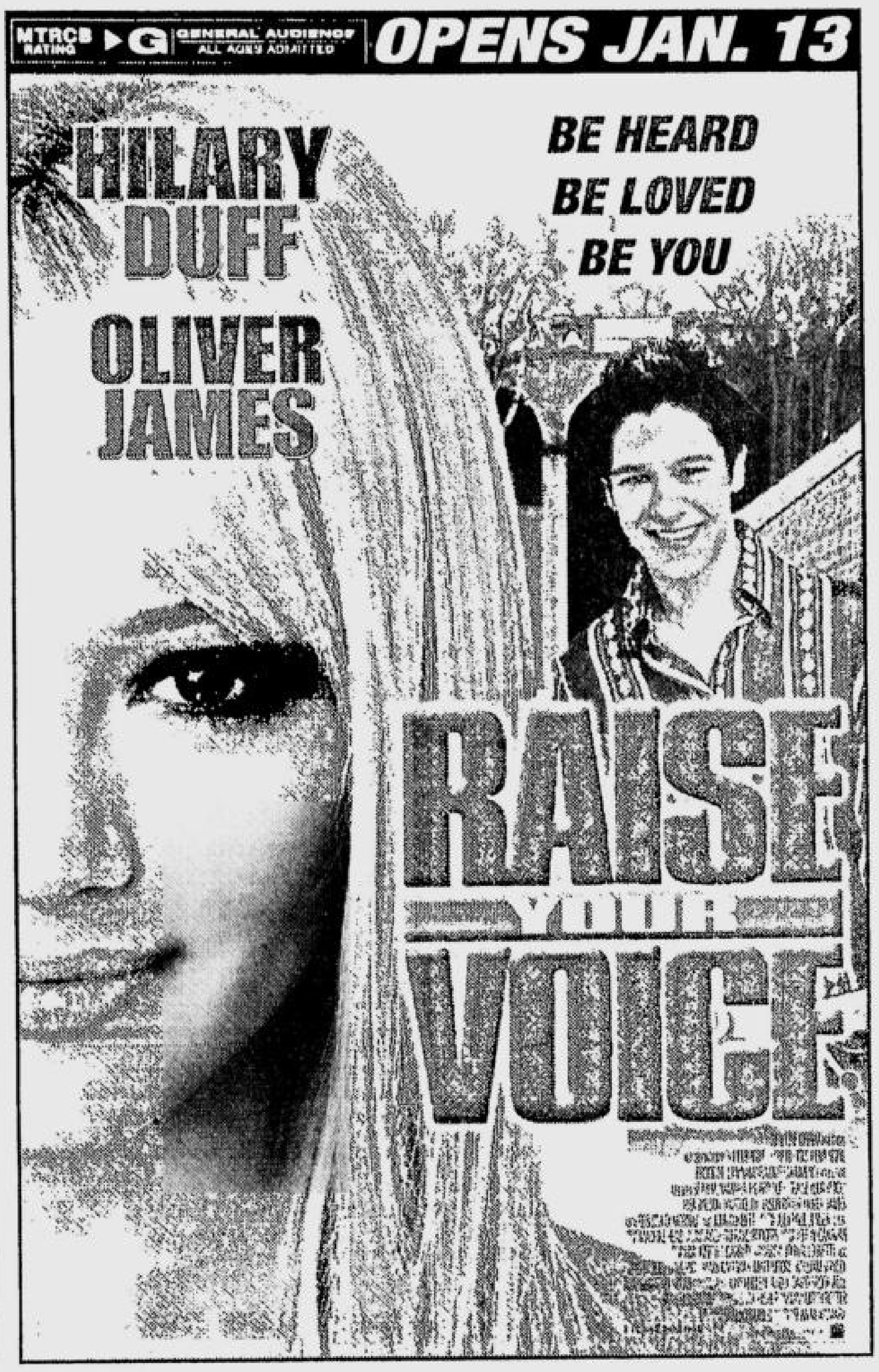
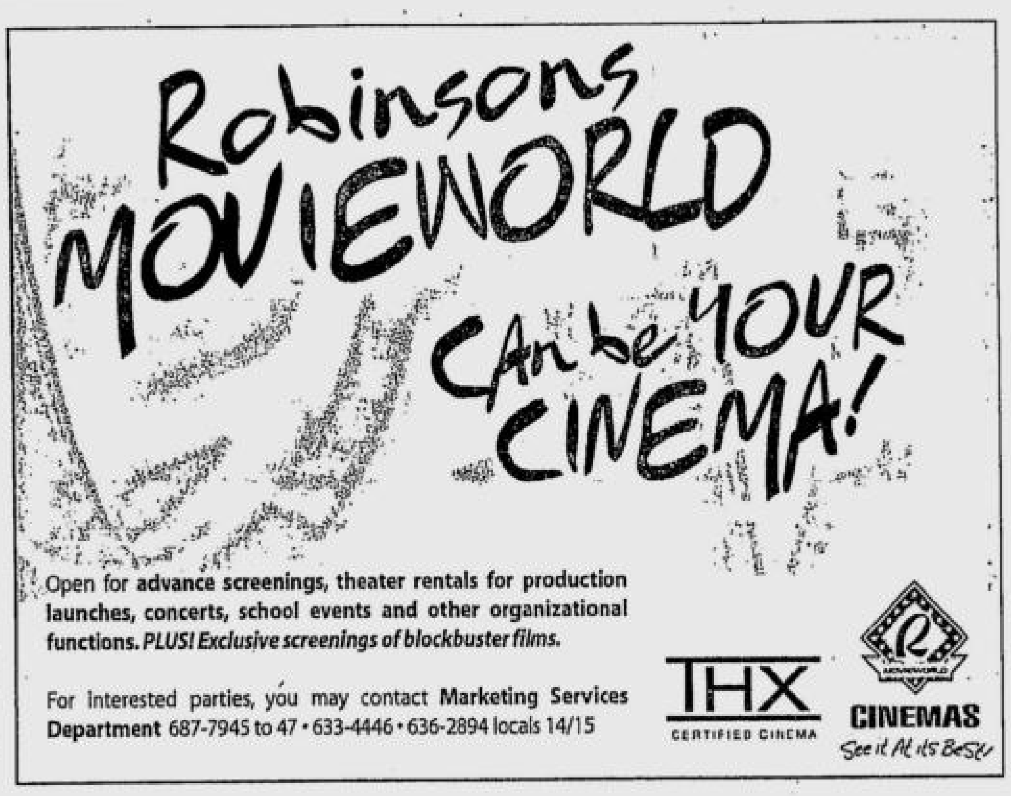

MTRCB RATING ▶ G GENERAL AUDIENCE ALL AGES ADMITTED
OPENS JAN. 13
HILARY DUFF
OLIVER JAMES
BE HEARD
BE LOVED
BE YOU
RAISE YOUR VOICE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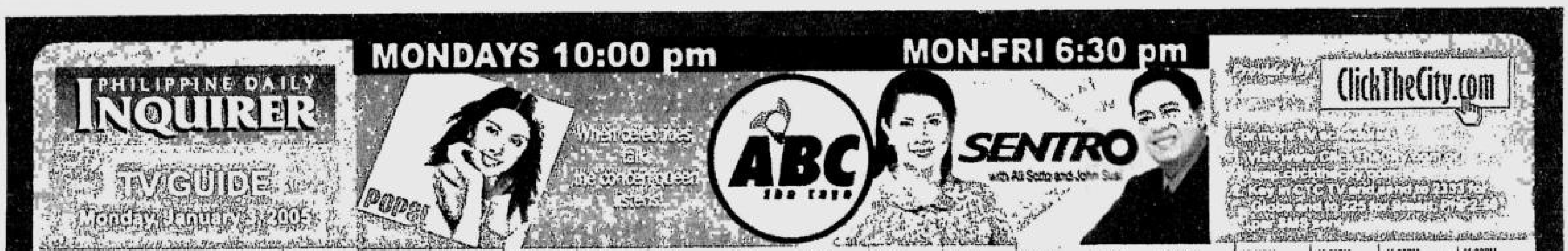
MONDAYS 10:00 pm
MON-FRI 6:30 pm
Popsi
ABC
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE

Monday, January 3, 2005

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Spirits	Krystala	Lovers in Paris	Hiram	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest	OK Fine! Whatever			Insider	The Correspondents
NBN	Value Vision				Teledyaryo	Value Vision	Next Stop			Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Musconi Cup 2003				Dial M	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	Art Is-Kool	Anime Ring Kaisho				Sentro	Friends	The Apprentice		Fear Factor		Big News	Popsi		Extreme Island	Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Leya (2:45PM)	Joyride (3:15 PM)	Snow Angel (3:45 PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8:45 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9:15 PM)-Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita			Saksi		
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Wrestling		NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Sex & the City	Wed TV	Healthline
IBC 13		V League				IBC Express Balita		Global Family Series		Retro TV		Legacy Of Hero		Retro TV	Global Family Series		IBC News Tonite	Linawin Natin	
Solar		Wow		Slamball		Rastol	Zeta Project	Mucha Lucha!	Spiderman	Deep Space Nine		Witchblade		Twilight Zone		Movie			
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Brother's Garcia	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	All That	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	Rocket Power	The Wild Thornberrys	The Brother's Garcia
MYX		Urban MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	OPM MYX Countdown		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		The O.C.		Saturday Night Live		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	JKX	Meet My Folks		Queer Eye For A Straight Guy		Dateline		Nip/ Tuck	
Studio 23	Bewitched	Urban MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	Batman Animated Series	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Wazzup Wazzup	World's Craziest Video	Jake 2.0		Charmed		News Central	The West Wing		Travel Time
AXN		24		24		The Right Stuff II	Rated X	Gensomaden Saiyuki	Gensomaden Saiyuki	7 Days		Fear Factor		The Shield		24		24	
Star World	When Hidden Cameras Attack	The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	That 70s Show	Everybody Loves Raymond	Grounded For Life	Becker	Breaking The Magician's Code		Friends	That 70s Show
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	Living Golf	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Killer Instinct	Totally Wild	Be The Creature		Planet Wild	Wildlife Detectives	The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Killer Instincts/ Totally Wild	Totally Wild	Be The Creature	
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Food 911	E! True Hollywood Story		Behind The Velvet Ropes	Area		Breathing Room	Genuine Article	Planet Parent	30 Minute Meals
HBO			Road To Redemption (3:45PM)				The Spitfire Grill (5:20 PM)			What A Girl Wants (7:15 PM)				Solo			Simone		
Star Movies				Emmett's Mark			Women Vs. Men (5:45 PM)			Den Of Lions (7:15 PM)				The Jackal				The Paradise Virus (11:05PM)	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	TBA					Yu-Gi-Oh!	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show	Courage The Cowardly Dog	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	The Addams Family	The Funky Phantom	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN						Big 12 Conf. Basketball- Georgia Tch vs. Kansas				Eng. Premier League Highlights 04/05		Sportscenter	Soccer FIFA Fever		Big 12 Conf. Basketball- Georgia Tch vs. Kansas				Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie McGuire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax				A Thief Of Time (4:15 PM)			Babylon 5: A Call To Arms			Mrs Winterbourne				Avenging Angelo			The Greenskeeper		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Five Days To Midnight				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Mysterious Ways		The District		Five Days To Midnight			Judging Amy (10:35PM)		Mysterious Ways
Discovery Channel		Monster Garage		Mythbusters		Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Unsolved History				Wild Discovery		Best Of Discovery			
MTV Philippines		MTV Lokal		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits	05 MAA Nominee Specials	MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline	MTV U-Break		MTV Brand New	MTV Fashionista	TRL		Cribs	Spring Break	VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus														NFL Delayed Telecast					
EWTN	St. Matthew	Angelus (3:15PM)	Benediction And Devotion	Story Keepers	Image Of God	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Light Of The East II	Voices On Value	EWTN Gallery	Threshold Of Hope Encore		Sunday Night Live With Fr. Groeschel		Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	G.K. Chesterton	Catholic Compass	

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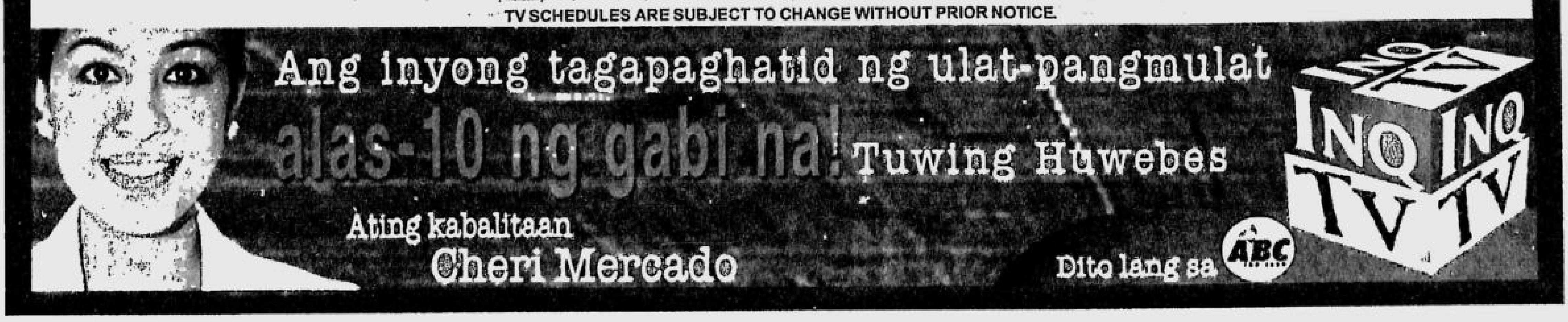
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1 MANO PO 3	1 MANO PO 3	1 LASTIKMAN	GUARANTEED SEATS 1 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	1 HAPPY TOGETHER
2 ENTENG KABISOTE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE	2 SIGAW	GUARANTEED SEATS 2 MANO PO 3	2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 ENTENG KABISOTE	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 ENTENG KABISOTE	3 SIGAW
4 HAPPY TOGETHER	4 HAPPY TOGETHER	4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	GUARANTEED SEATS 4 HAPPY TOGETHER	4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 AISHITE IMASU		5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	GUARANTEED SEATS 5 SIGAW	5 MANO PO 3
		6 HAPPY TOGETHER		
		7 AISHITE IMASU		

GB1 GREENBELT 1

1 MANO PO 3
2 HAPPY TOGETHER

At the Activity Center

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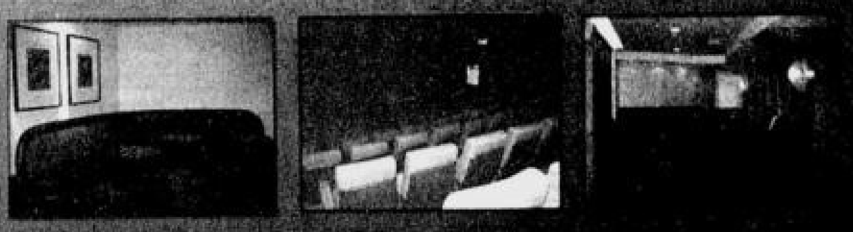

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Gen Rosso's shows tackle . . .

From page A24

needed dance, acting and arias with pop-rock. The show opened in the famous opera house L'Arena in Verona, and the performance was so popular that it later became a film.

In the '90s, the group went decisively into rock. It left the theaters behind, and the shows gradually became concerts, playing at venues like sports stadiums and town squares.

The songs got more direct, the guitars and rhythm sections became more active, and the concerts took on topics like racism, peace, immigration, globalization and suffering.

Despite the demanding subject matter, the group's shows always managed to end up being an exciting celebration. They helped their audience to reflect and find the strength to effect changes in their everyday lives.

Above all, they transmitted deep convictions about life. And they helped the members of the audience to enjoy themselves, and recharged them with a contagious sense of joy. To date, they have performed in 41 countries.

Gen Rosso's current show, "Streetlight," which it will probably perform in the Philippines later this year, is a musical in two acts based on the true story of **Charles Moats**.

Charles was a youth who longed for something greater than what his urban ghetto had to offer. Growing up in the south side of Chicago, he longed for a better life.

In the musical, Charles is a kid with hopes and dreams looking for a way out of the trap he's in. His ideals are severely tested, but together with his new friends in the Streetlight Band, he discovers what making choices and friends is all about.

It all starts out in Henry's garage, where more than just another gig is ready to be unleashed. This, it turns out, is the chance of a lifetime.

On the other side of town, all hell breaks loose when Trey's little sister, Lisa, falls victim to crossfire.

Charles' best friend, Jordan, is a street-wise teen caught between the two worlds. He's too much in love with Lisa to stop himself from making a choice that he may regret for life.

Raised in the streets and gangsters by nature, Trey and his gang want revenge, while Jordan just wants Lisa back. Now, it's time for them to take sides.

In the ensuing madness, Charles and the boys in the band discover that their scenario is really a sketchboard for a greater plan—to fulfill a dream and form a star that will serve as a guiding light for all.

Feedback

FROM **Paul R. Mortel** of Marikina City: "Super Radyo dzBB recently lost **Rene Jose** and **Rey Pacheco**, who joined dzXL-RMN-Manila, making a one-hour weekday time slot available. I suggest that **Mike C. Enriquez** get former Sen. **Eddie Ilarde** to do a show on that time slot . . ."

Movies on TV

ON HBO today at 3:45 p.m., "Road to Redemption." Jan. 4 at 6:15 p.m., "Only You." Jan. 5 at 6 a.m., "Duet for One." 1 p.m., "Sinbad." 5:45 p.m., "Little Nikita."

On Cinemax today at 9:15 a.m., "Slackers." 2:15 p.m., "The Man Who Knew Too Much." 7:15 p.m., "Mrs. Winterbourne." Jan. 4 at 5:30 p.m., "Don King Only in America." 1:30 a.m., "Spartacus." Jan. 5 at 8:30 a.m., "Accidental Hero." 5:30 p.m., "The Fabulous Baker Boys."

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2 RESERVED
3 (DTS) RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 SIGAW
2 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) MANO PO - 3
4 LASTIKMAN

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 MANO PO - 3
2 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS) LASTIKMAN
4 SIGAW

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 MANO PO - 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) SIGAW

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) MONO PO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS) LASTIKMAN
4 SIGAW
5

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 AISHITE IMASU 1941
2 LASTIKMAN
3 (DTS) MANO PO - 3
4 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 MANO PO - 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 LASTIKMAN

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 LASTIKMAN
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 (DTS) MANO PO - 3

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) ENTENG KABISOTE
2 SIGAW
3 (DTS EX) MANO PO
4 LASTIKMAN

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 MONO PO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) LASTIKMAN
4 (DTS) HAPPY TOGETHER

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 MONO PO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) LASTIKMAN
4 (DTS) HAPPY TOGETHER

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 SKY CAPTAIN
2 SHARK TALE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 7953320
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 (DOLBY) MANO PO - 3

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2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SIGAW
5 MANO PO 3

LIPA (043) 757-3684 (043) 312-5870
1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SIGAW
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 LASTIKMAN

DASMARIÑAS [illegible]
1 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 SIGAW
4 AISHITE IMASU
5 LASTIKMAN

ANGELES (045) 892-2348
1 SIGAW
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
4 MANO PO 3

IMUS [illegible]
1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
6 LASTIKMAN

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270
1 SIGAW
2 AISHITE IMASU
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

BACOLOD [illegible]
1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

ILOILO (033) 336-8070
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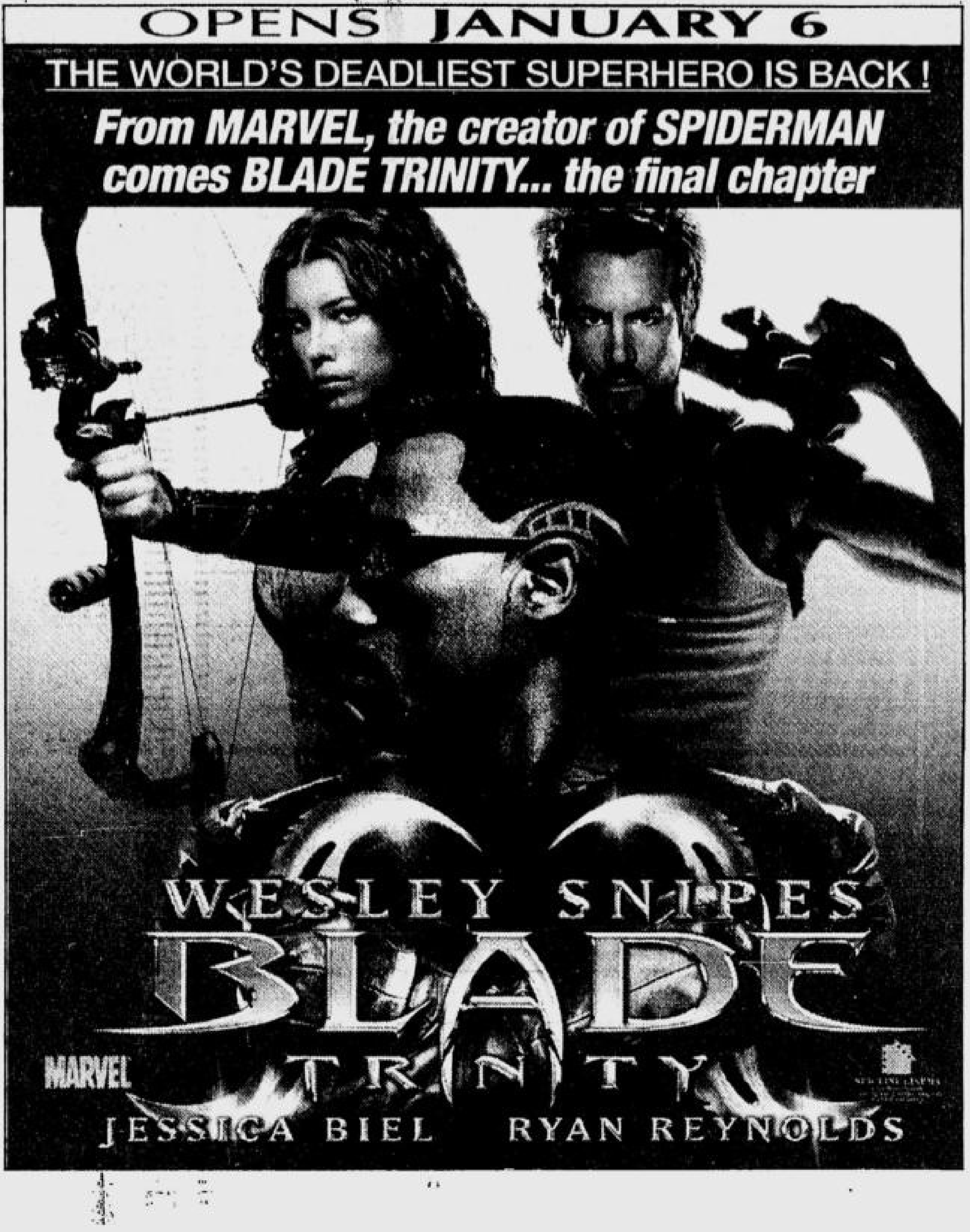
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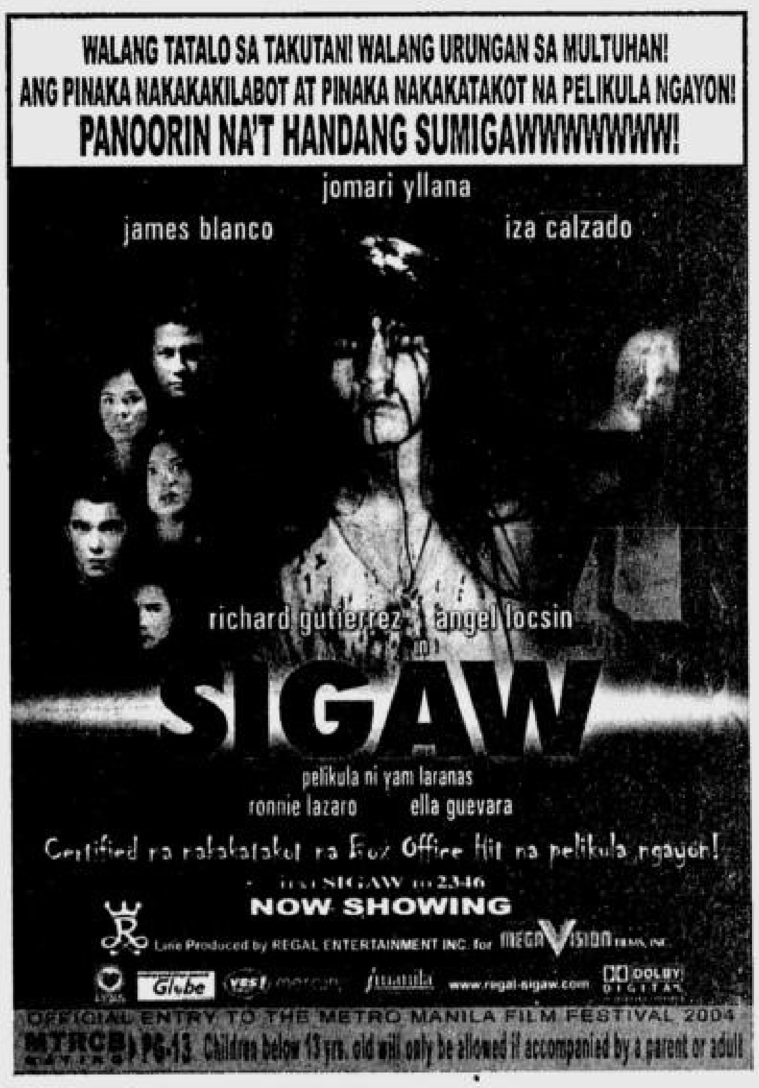
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OPENS JANUARY 6
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Being a good guy is harder than it looks.
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KUNG FU HUSTLE
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MTRCB booed, cheered in 2004

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE MOVIE and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) was at the receiving end of a mix of boos and cheers this year.

At least two groups—the Women's Secretariat of the International Lesbian and Gay Association, and Pinoy Pride—accused the censors body of "ignorance and lack of objectivity," when it scolded two show-biz talk shows for airing the "wedding" of a lesbian couple last May.

The censors warned "The Buzz" on ABS-CBN and "S-Files" on GMA 7 when they featured the wedding of Elaine Crisostomo, former partner of young actress Desiree del Valle, to a new lover, Ava Mendoza, last May 16.

An MTRCB memorandum, signed by chair Marissa Laguardia, had described lesbian relationships as "an abnormality of human nature."

But the very same gay groups commended Laguardia when she apologized for the "strongly worded" memo. Laguardia said she only wanted talk shows "to be more sensitive to impressionable young minds, as well as to present issues more sensitively."

Laguardia even sponsored an open forum with Pinoy Pride, headed by Ana Leah Sarabia, at the MTRCB office, according to the MTRCB chair's secretary, Cynthia Pilar.

Last October, the MTRCB chided Regine Velasquez; host of "Pinoy Pop Superstar" on GMA 7, and Zsa Zsa Padilla of "Born Diva" on ABS-CBN for wearing "too revealing" outfits on their shows.

While several personalities lashed out at the MTRCB, the warning had a noticeable effect on Regine and Zsa Zsa's wardrobe. The two hosts started wearing gowns that showed decidedly less cleavage than what they used to wear.

2 Joeys suspended

TV hosts Joey de Leon ("Eat Bulaga!") and Joey Marquez ("S-Files") were suspended—De Leon for two months and Marquez for two episodes—after the censors caught them using "vulgar words" on their shows.

De Leon's suspension, imposed by "Eat Bulaga" producers Television Production Exponents Inc. (TAPE), started Aug. 11.

Marquez was not allowed to appear in the Aug. 29 and Sept. 5 editions of the "S-Files," according to a memo from the show's program manager, Redgie Magno.

THANKLESS JOB. "I try to strike a balance between being liberal and being conservative," says the beleaguered Laguardia.

REGINE Velasquez

ZSA ZSA Padilla

But last September, the MTRCB allowed De Leon to come back to "Eat Bulaga" after only one month and one week of the two-month suspension. "I think, this time, [De Leon] has really learned his lesson and would do away with saying green jokes on television," Laguardia said.

TV word war

Even evangelist Eliseo "Brother Ely" Soriano's TV program, "Ang Dating Daan," did not escape the MTRCB. Laguardia announced the show's three-month suspension last September.

The MTRCB pointed out that Soriano used cuss words in his show whenever he went about his usual tirade against the Iglesia ni Cristo.

Soriano's group, Ang Dating Daan, and the Iglesia ni Cristo have long been engaged in a word war on TV.

Last March, ABS-CBN suspended Viva Hot Babe Asia Agcaoili for 20 days following an MTRCB complaint after one of Asia's breasts was exposed during an opening dance number on the noontime show "MTB: Ang Saya Saya."

"Extra Challenge" co-host Ethel Booba was also suspended for one episode last Dec. 8 for wearing "inappropriate outfits" on the show.

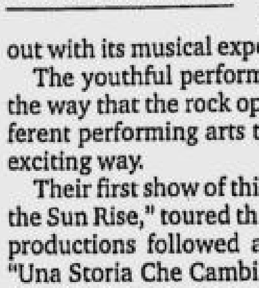
Laguardia said Asia and Ethel were "very apologetic" about breaking MTRCB rules and

MTRCB/A21

Gen Rosso's shows tackle relevant topics

OUR RECENT piece on the Focolare Movement's "signature" performing group, Gen Rosso, has elicited requests for more details about the youthful band of performers, particularly since its performance tour this year could include the Philippines.

VIEWFINDER


Nestor U. Torre

We've already detailed the group's activities in the '60s and '70s. In the '80s, Gen Rosso went through its rock opera phase.

The rock opera was relatively unexplored at the time, so the Focolare performers were able to make solid contributions in fleshing it out with its musical experiments.

The youthful performers particularly liked the way that the rock opera format joined different performing arts together in a new and exciting way.

Their first show of this kind, "Someone Lets the Sun Rise," toured the United States. Other productions followed and eventually led to "Una Storia Che Cambia (The Ever-changing Story)," the group's most developed show at that time.

It was a stylistic milestone, a musical which

GEN ROSSO'S/A22

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SSS selling ₱14.5B worth of assets

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-OWNED Social Security System plans to unload assets with a combined book value of about P14.5 billion in line with efforts to boost its financial condition.

Among the biggest items in the list are SSS' prime property along Ayala Avenue which is now being used as the head office of Union Bank of the Philippines, shares in the consortium that built the posh Philamlife Tower along Paseo de Roxas, two prime lots in the Fort Bonifacio Global City and a portion of its property in the Manila Harbor Center across Smokey Mountain in Tondo.

SSS officials said the pension fund's primary purpose was to "unlock values," such that if a joint venture or long-term lease was more viable, these options can be considered.

"But we are offering most for sale," SSS senior vice president for investments Edgar Solilapsi told reporters in a briefing.

To date, he said, the pension fund was negotiating with power transmission firm GNR Power for the sale of three hectares of the SSS' seven-hectare property in the Manila Harbor Center.

Solilapsi said the transmission company was planning to build a transmission line on the said property.

With the land in that area now fetching P20,000 to P22,000 per square meter, he said the SSS could generate about P600 million from the sale of portion of its Manila Harbor property.

By liquidating some of its assets, the SSS plans to free up cash for other investment opportunities that could provide better and faster returns.

Solilapsi said the SSS, likewise, owned two lots near the Essensa Tower which could be used for high-rise development in Fort Bonifacio.

The Fort Bonifacio property was acquired when the SSS foreclosed on a P1-billion loan of Bonifacio Land Co. under a bond swap arrangement.

He said the SSS had leased out for the next 10 years a five-hectare property along Roxas Boulevard facing the Department of Foreign Affairs building to Hong Kong-based retailer Sun Plaza.

"We will receive P370 million in rental earnings for the next 10 years," he said noting that the area would be used as a retail center similar to the home depot in the Ortigas central business district.

The property, which is near the Philippine National Bank head office, was acquired by the SSS for P70 million in the 1980s.

But Solilapsi said the SSS did not have to use the Special Purpose Vehicle framework when selling its properties.

"We're already tax-exempt," he said.

In the meantime, the SSS was able to narrow down its 2004 deficit—or the differential between the amount released to members in the form of benefits and the contributions collected—to only P400 million. The deficit stood at P7.6 billion in 2002 and it declined sharply to P3.4 billion in 2003 when the 1-percentage point hike in contribution was implemented.

The pension fund is also expected to post a net income of at least P2.4-P2.5 billion in 2004 on the back of an expected 12-percent growth in revenue to P44 billion from a year ago.

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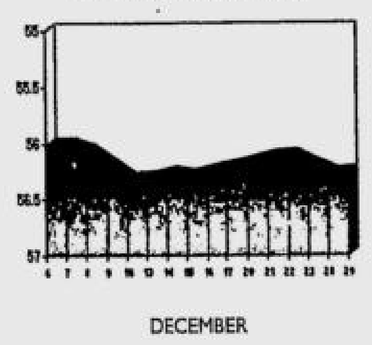

P 56.28 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 29, 2004

¥ 103.78 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec.30, 2004

GOLD: $436.00-436.50
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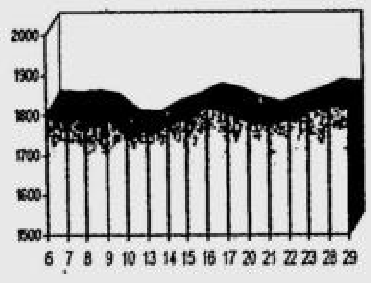
STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Brighter trading year ahead seen

STOCK analysts see a brighter year ahead, pinning hopes on the government's resolve to curb its budget shortfall.

"Barring unforeseen negative news, we see the market moving higher in early January 2005, buoyed by expectations of the government's firmer commitment to resolve the country's budget deficit problem and the local monetary authorities' move to keep borrowing costs down," Grace Cerdenia of 2TradeAsia.com, said.

In a yearend report, Cerdenia said long-term solutions were in place to plug the country's fiscal gap, which was estimated to hit P150 billion in 2005 against last year's projected P195 billion.

Other than the pending proposals on higher value added taxes , the approval of the bill on sin taxes is expected to raise an additional revenue of P15 billion for the government, she said.

"Also, if the additional rate increase will be granted to state-run National Power Corp., another P20 billion in expenditure savings is expected. This should prevent credit ratings downgrade by international rating firms," she also said.

Adding to the positive outlook is a hint from local monetary authorities to keep interest rates in 2005 unchanged, especially if the anticipated tax receipts would materialize.

"As long as the government does not crowd out private funds and the necessary fiscal measures are approved, the country is likely to succeed in its participation in the planned $1.5-billion Asian bond float," she added.

Cerdenia said the sectors that would likely boost this year's trading were mining, telecommunications, power and infrastructure.

"These sectors will likely emerge the favorites for the year given their growth prospects. Immediate support is 1,800, resistance at 1,830-1,850," she said.

Cerdenia, however, warned that the volatility of the world crude prices and the US Federal Reserve's move to increase its rates might slow down growth in 2005.

Share prices ended the last trading session of the year mixed with profit-taking in selected blue chips. Some last-minute window-dressing or yearend buying braced the main index's fall. The main composite index closed lower by 3.15 points or 0.18 percent to 1,822.83 last Wednesday.

For the year, the main index surged 26.4

BRIGHTER/ B2

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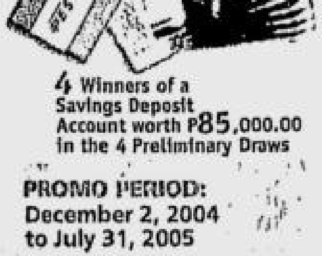
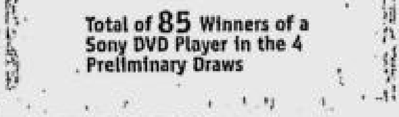
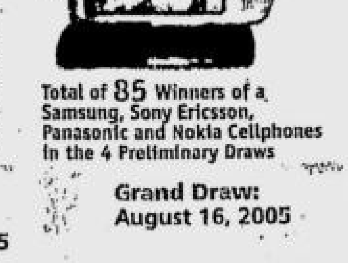


4 Winners of a Savings Deposit Account worth P85,000.00 in the 4 Preliminary Draws



Total of 85 Winners of a Sony DVD Player in the 4 Preliminary Draws



Total of 85 Winners of a Samsung, Sony Ericsson, Panasonic and Nokia Cellphones in the 4 Preliminary Draws

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Budget gap in '05 seen at ₱180B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL government's budget deficit for 2005 is expected to decline to about P180 billion, from P194 billion in 2004, as a result of the recent signing of the sin tax law and the expected approval of more revenue-raising measures within the first quarter of the year.

This was the projection made by the Department of Finance (DOF), which is pinning its hopes on Congress to legislate more of the Arroyo administration's proposed fiscal-reform measures to keep the medium-term target of a zero deficit achievable.

According to Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, the deficit this year will hover around P180 billion, or lower than the original target of P184.5 billion, because of the additional revenues to be generated by the increase in the excise tax on cigarettes and alcohol.

The sin tax law is estimated to increase tax collection by about P15 billion a year.

A P14-billion year-on-year reduction in the deficit for 2005 (P194-billion expected deficit for 2004 less the P180-billion expected deficit this year) will be a big leap from the expected P5.9-billion year-on-year reduction in 2004. The projected deficit of P194 billion for 2004 will be P5.9 billion lower than the P199.9 billion actual deficit recorded in 2003.

"Despite the assumption of interest payments for Napocor's debts, the national government's budget deficit will be lower than the original program because of the sin taxes," Amatong said in an interview.

Amatong was referring to the P18.8 billion worth of interest payments for the debts of National Power Corp. that the national government will be paying this year. The national government assumed P200 billion worth of Napocor's debts, but it has decided to initially pay P18.8 billion.

The country's finance chief said the national government's fiscal position this year will also be trengthened by administrative revenue-generating activities, such as the increase in the fees and charges by several government agencies and technological enhancements by the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

Amatong earlier announced that the DOF and the Department of Budget and Management signed a joint memorandum order for government agencies to raise their fees and charges. The order will result in the minimum increase of 20 percent in the fees and charged collected by the agencies.

Of the other legislative proposals of the government's economic team, Amatong said, the bill seeking to raise collection from value-added tax is expected to be the next one to be approved by Congress.

Canadian firm eyes deal with Lepanto

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CANADIAN mining firm Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. is looking into the mining claims of Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. for a potential investment in the latter's assets, industry sources told the INQUIRER.

Industry sources, however, could not confirm whether it was Ivanhoe that bought 2.7 billion Lepanto class B shares last week, which was equivalent to roughly 12.7 percent of the firm's total outstanding shares.

Lepanto is expected to soon disclose details on the special block sale of B shares worth P1.2 billion or roughly at 45 centavos a share.

Ivanhoe Mines chair and founder Robert Friedland recently met with Lepanto group chair Felipe Yap to discuss the Canadian firm's possible investment in mining projects here, particularly in Lepanto.

"I am excited to look at investment opportunities here in the Philippines," Friedland said.

Ivanhoe considered investing in Lepanto as early as the 1990s, but talks did not push through because of various factors, particularly the legal restrictions on foreign ownership.

But with the recent Supreme Court ruling that allowed full foreign ownership of companies involved in mining projects, Ivanhoe was among the first to revive investment talks.

Ivanhoe was the toast of the mining world when it struck copper and gold in Mongolia, which led to a flurry of mining activity in the area over the past two years.

By the end of 2003, Ivanhoe Mines had secured approximately $333 million in international equity financing since drilling in Southern Mongolia.

Ivanhoe is focused on the production of base and precious metals and the development of new producing assets and exploration discoveries.

True wealth

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

AS WE put to a close a most unsettling year that was 2004, the same question asked at the start of each new year comes to mind: What will 2005 have in store for us, whether as a nation or as individual families and persons? Can we look forward to a better year ahead, or are we likely to face even more difficult challenges?

Drivers for 2004

A year ago in this column, I discussed three factors that would drive the economy's performance in 2004, with the general expectation that the economy would perform better than in the year before.

The three drivers were improved performance of our major economic partners, especially the US and China, election spending, and improving economic fundamentals, particularly government fiscal performance.

I suppose two out of three isn't bad… and we weren't exactly wrong on the third one either.

Exports in particular were boosted by the stronger US and Chinese economies. Election spending provided the kick that speeded up output and income growth, especially in the first half.

As for the third factor, the picture has been mixed. Indications are that the government deficit will be smaller (and therefore better) than the conservatively set target of P185 billion for the full year.

But hiding behind this piece of positive news is the increasingly precarious budget situation, with the debt service burden worsening rather than improving, on through 2005 based on government's own projections.

And the needed improvement in revenues to overcome this problem have so far been elusive, both in terms of the revenue measures coming from Congress so far, and tax collection performance, especially with the recent news that both BIR and Customs are projected to miss their targets for the full year.

Cloudy crystal ball

Forecasting for 2005 seems to be a rather hazardous undertaking at this time, what with so many "ifs" hanging in the air, and no clear indication on how several key drivers will shape up. The much-feared credit ratings downgrade remains a critical threat, because if it happens, it could sink us deeper in the hole we're already in.

Our government's borrowing costs will dramatically increase. Banks will lose heavily from the resulting drop in market values of government debt instruments they are holding huge sums of. And capital flight is likely to ensue, intensify and possibly have a contagion effect around the region.

While the ratings agencies are fully aware of the likely dire consequences of their downgrades, they are still driven first and foremost by their responsibility to give sound advice to fund investors, and less by sympathy to the countries they rate.

Thus, whether or not we get the credit downgrade depends largely on what we do.

Will the executive be able to crack the whip convincingly and dramatically improve tax collection and curb tax evasion? Will Congress muster the political will and provide for durable revenue measures that will correct existing weaknesses in the tax system and yield substantial additional income for the government?

Add to this the other things beyond our control that can go right, or go wrong: Will the weather favor improved agricultural production? Will we be spared of more devastating calamities that entail huge repair and rehabilitation costs, apart from human lives? Will the world economy see more shocks that could in turn slow our domestic economy down, or be lifted by positive developments that would translate to better opportunities for us?

I must confess that never in the past have I felt as hard-pressed as now to identify more definite factors that could drive or drag our economy in the year ahead.

I could easily tell you that our Ateneo Macroeconomic Forecasting Model (AMFM) forecasts a 4.8-5.5 percent GDP growth for 2005, but I would not go out on a limb with these numbers, as it does not yet factor in critical factors, like a possible credit downgrade on the downside, or dramatic improvement in government revenue performance (wishful thinking?) on the upside.

Neither does it factor in any possible external events beyond our control, whether good or bad.

Wealth that matters

GDP/GNP growth may speed up or slow down next year, but one senses that the vast majority of Filipinos don't really care.

For many, the growth rate of the economy has no necessary bearing on whether they will feel better off or worse off next year. The recent SWS survey showing record levels of pessimism among Filipinos in spite of relatively good economic growth numbers bears this out.

I am writing this by the light of a kerosene lamp in the hills of Rosario, La Union, at the Puso ng Carmelo where a small group of nuns established a community and retreat haven devoid of the trappings of modern living, including electric power, by choice. Here they have demonstrated that one can find joy and fulfillment with a minimum of man-made material wealth, but more than made up for by the bounty of the God-given wealth around us—and the peace and tranquility that a life of simplicity close to nature brings.

In so doing, they have similarly inspired the surrounding communities to find joy in what little they have.

Rarely in my life have I felt as much joy and peace as our brief stay in this wonderful place has given me.

Here I am convinced that true happiness is within everyone's reach.

We simply need to strip ourselves of the man-made objects that mislead us to look elsewhere for that happiness—when it is to be found all around us, and right here within our very hearts.

Filipinos, it is often said, are a resilient people. We can smile and laugh amid deprivation, adversity and even despair.

Never mind about next year's GNP or GDP growth. With our abiding faith in God and the unfailing hope that it brings, I daresay we must have among the highest levels of Gross National Happiness per capita in the world.

That is the wealth that truly matters, and I have heard foreigners actually express envy for that.

I wish you more happiness in the New Year ahead. *Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu*

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Baguio Country Club	500,000	600,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	-	80,000
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	-	70,000
Camp John Hay	-	180,000
Canlubang	400,000	460,000
Canyon Woods	-	180,000
Capitol Hills	100,000	120,000
Cebu Country Club	1,600,000	1,800,000
Celebrity Sports Club	-	140,000
Club Filipino	100,000	120,000
Eagleridge "A"	-	250,000
Eagleridge "B"	-	300,000
Eagleridge "C"	-	300,000
Forest Hills "A"	-	130,000
Forest Hills "B"	-	200,000
Forest Hills "C"	-	220,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	180,000	200,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	-	250,000
Manila Golf (Corporate)	Please Call	-
Manila Golf (Individual)	10,500,000	-
Manila Polo	2,100,000	2,250,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	350,000	400,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	550,000	650,000
Manila Yacht Club	-	380,000
Metroclub "A"	110,000	130,000
Mimosa (Individual)	120,000	150,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	-	275,000
Mt Malarayat Gold "A"	-	250,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	-	300,000
Orchard Golf Club "A"	150,000	200,000
Orchard Golf Club "C"	-	350,000
Quezon City Sports Club	145,000	180,000
Rockwell	230,000	300,000
Spa & Lodge	500,000	650,000
Sta. Elena "A"	Please Call	1,400,000
Sta. Elena "B"	-	1,500,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Corporate)	-	170,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Individual)	-	120,000
Tagaytay Country Club	370,000	430,000
Tagaytay Highlands	780,000	850,000
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	700,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	120,000	150,000
Valle Verde (Corporate)	-	200,000
Valley Golf	200,000	300,000
Wack Wack Golf Club	6,200,000	-

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Pilipinas Kao gets incentives

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE Economic Zone Authority recently granted incentives to the $67-million plant of Pilipinas Kao Inc. in Jasaan Misamis Oriental Ecozone.

The plant will produce high purity fatty alcohol, which is used as a raw material for soaps and detergents.

Considered a pioneering project, Pilipinas Kao's investment will be entitled to a six-year income tax holiday, plus a two-year extension.

The Japanese firm plans to start construction of the facility in June this year and conduct a test run a year later.

Commercial operation of the plant, with a production capacity of 100,000 tons a year, is slated for August 2006.

Pilipinas Kao plans to export 80 percent of its output to customers around the world, with the remainder to be sold to local industries.

In a letter to Peza Director General Lilia de Lima, Pilipinas Kao president Haruhiko Terada said the new facility will replace the firm's existing plant, which will stop operation.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 29, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	1,297,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	27.5	28	26.5	26.5	1,396,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	52.5	52.5	52	52.5	1,485,100
China Banking Corp.	575	575	560	560	1,300
Citystate Savings Bank	17.25	17.5	17.25	17.5	3,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	47.5	48	47.5	48	22,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	60,000
International Exch. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	263,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	27	27.5	26.5	26.5	409,800
Philippine National Bank	22.5	22.5	22.5	22.5	300
Philippine Trust Co.	34.5	34.5	34.5	34.5	896,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	12,100
Security Bank Corporation	28	29	28	29	85,700
Union Bank of the Phil.	23.75	23.75	23.75	23.75	1,100
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.4	40,000
First Abacus Financial	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	50,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2480	2480	2480	2480	370
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.4	1.42	1.4	1.42	520,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	110	110	109	109	50,300
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1815	1830	1815	1830	2,700
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	1.76	1.76	1.7	1.74	9,645,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	965	965	950	955	2,400
Ipeople Inc	3.4	3.45	3.05	3.05	146,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	1,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.034	0.034	0.033	0.034	500,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	370,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp	2.32	2.36	2.2	2.36	90,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.55	2.65	7,463,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	15,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1370	1375	1350	1360	171,930
Ivantage Corp.	0.66	0.68	0.65	0.65	22,440,000
Philweb Corp.	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.011	20,400,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.75	15.75	15.5	15.5	44,700
Manila Electric Co. B	24.75	24.75	24.5	24.75	358,000
Petron Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.25	2,383,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	42,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	510,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	10,500,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	7,310,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	1.96	2.02	1.96	1.98	7,058,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	22,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28	28.5	27.5	28.5	52,800
Pancake House Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	10,000
RFM Corporation	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	70,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58.5	59	58.5	59	68,300
San Miguel Corp. B	75	75	74	75	329,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	1,000,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0048	0.0048	0.0046	0.0048	20,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	8,000,000
Ayala Corporation	6.7	6.7	6.6	6.6	2,902,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	60,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	120,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.56	1.58	1.56	1.58	44,000
APC Group Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	100,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	20,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.68	1.72	1.68	1.72	40,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.83	0.83	0.75	0.75	130,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	16	16	16	16	8,400
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.68	0.69	0.67	0.68	20,460,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	780,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.21	0.21	900,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.11	0.115	0.11	0.115	670,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.85	3.7	3.8	8,018,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.03	0.03	0.029	0.029	1,600,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	130,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.65	670,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	0.79	0.8	0.79	0.8	20,000
F&J Prince Hldgs. B	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	31	31	30	30	669,200
Global Equities Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	500,000
House of Investments Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	50,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc	2.75	2.8	2.7	2.7	1,006,000
Keppel Holdings	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	750,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.4	2.48	2.32	2.34	450,000
Medco Holdings	0.3	0.33	0.3	0.33	360,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.24	1.24	1,000,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	400,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.32	0.32	9,940,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1	1	1	1	10,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	450,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	200,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	340,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.12	4,100,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.195	0.195	0.185	0.19	140,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	5,000
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	2.6	2.85	2.6	2.85	5,000
Music Semiconductors Corp	1.62	1.62	1.58	1.62	211,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	10,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	100,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.61	0.61	0.59	0.59	700,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.98	1	0.95	0.95	2,140,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.5	0.57	0.5	0.55	150,000
Grand Plaza Hotel Corp.	33	33	33	33	1,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	30,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	680,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.5	41,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.5	9.9	9.1	9.8	1,111,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.2	7.3	7.2	7.3	12,795,000
Cityland Development Corp	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	3,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.24	1,760,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.13	0.135	0.13	0.135	2,190,000
Elb Realty Developers Inc	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	80,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.32	0.34	7,440,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.12	8,155,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.16	0.165	0.16	0.165	280,000
City & Land Developers	2	2	2	2	3,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	10,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.4	88,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.195	210,000
SM Development Corp.	1.36	1.4	1.36	1.4	25,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.7	5,034,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	64,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.85	484,000
Benguet Corp. A	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	55,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.55	3.75	3.55	3.6	1,210,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.39	0.41	0.38	0.41	92,740,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.45	0.46	0.44	0.45	58,230,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	359,400,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.027	0.027	0.026	0.026	375,900,000
Omico Corporation	0.0046	0.0046	0.0046	0.0046	40,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.7	0.76	0.7	0.75	8,200,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.76	0.8	0.76	0.8	11,070,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	320,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	2,000,000
Interport Res.	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	5,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	15,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	11,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0044	0.0046	0.0044	0.0046	97,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	100,000
Pacifica	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	1,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.38	2.4	2.34	2.34	140,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.047	0.049	0.043	0.046	800,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	10,000

CURRENCIES

January 29, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.734538	1.000000	56.2670
Japan	Yen	0.007128	0.009704	0.5460
United Kingdom	Pound	1.416189	1.928000	108.4828
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.094498	0.128649	7.2387
Switzerland	Franc	0.648141	0.882379	49.6488
Canada	Dollar	0.603366	0.821423	46.2190
Singapore	Dollar	0.449204	0.611546	34.4099
Australia	Dollar	0.571758	0.778392	43.7978
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.948222	2.652309	149.2375
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.195872	0.266660	15.0042
Brunei	Dollar	0.447835	0.609682	34.3050
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000079	0.000107	0.0060
Thailand	Baht	0.018812	0.025611	1.4411
UAE	Dirham	0.200015	0.272301	15.3216
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.361400	76.6019
Argentina	Peso	0.247528	0.336984	18.9611
Brazil	Real	0.273073	0.371761	20.9179
Denmark	Kroner	0.134398	0.182969	10.2951
India	Rupee	0.016832	0.022915	1.2894
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.193325	0.263193	14.8091
Mexico	New Peso	0.065467	0.089127	5.0149
New Zealand	Dollar	0.530199	0.721813	40.6143
Korea	Won	0.000705	0.000960	0.0540
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.022937	0.031226	1.7570

Brighter trading . . .

From page B1

percent year-on-year from last year's close of 1,442.37.

Trading resumes today with little incentive to create volatility, Vistan also said.

"The market is likely to move sideways with a positive bias. The positive momentum from the previous sessions may carry over to early next year. Support is seen at 1,740 while initial resistance is at 1,830," he added.

BPI Trade for its part said it was uncertain if the market would enjoy the same level of buying strength in the first few trading days of the new year.

"Trading activity tends to be weaker as investors wait out the release of full year results sometime late January or early Feb," BPI Trade said. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

Fireworks war

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

METRO Pacific may have given up control of the Fort in favor of the Ayalas, but it looks like the New Year's Eve fireworks competition with the Ayalas still continues.

Metro Pacific's money-spinning sister company, Smart, was so determined to outbang and outlast the fireworks display set up in Ayala Avenue that, according to the grapevine, Smart even obtained the services and cornered the more spectacular rockets of the fireworks importer that supplies the Ayala contractor.

(Note: This column was submitted before New Year's Eve.)

Smart reportedly had been invited by Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay to become a major sponsor of the New Year fireworks show, but begged off after being advised that it could not set up and display merchandising banners along the breadth of Ayala Avenue to capitalize on the sponsorship.

At the last minute, Smart sister company, the radio station NBC, managed to book the open field beside the NBC Tent, for a combination open-air and indoor (for Smart Infinity subscribers) concerts, both to culminate in what had been billed as the most spectacular fireworks show for the evening.

Apparently, the Ayalas, now the new masters of the Fort, came to know only of the other fireworks show after Smart came out with rushed print ads churned out by its agency's so-called "midnight shift."

The Fort event, incidentally, was to be covered live by ABC 5, whose principal happens to be PLDT's Antonio Cojuangco Jr., while Ayala managed to invite the country's largest network, ABS-CBN, to cover live at least the countdown and the fireworks display.

In the meantime, ABS-CBN, still shell-shocked over the loss of market dominance and the internal revolt of top officers, decided not to stage its own concert, unlike top-rating GMA-7, which ramped up with its own showbiz extravaganza in Manila's Baywalk to welcome the new, and we hope, more prosperous year.

The prosperous part of course is another story.

Lie-flats seats=higher mileage

IT is going to cost more mileage to snag an upgrade or fly business class through Northwest Airlines starting March.

From 90,000 frequent flier miles, it will take120,000 miles beginning March 1 to win a roundtrip business class ticket to the continental United States and Canada out of Manila.

The only airline so far to offer lie-flat seats to key US and Canadian cities from Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Northwest has also raised the upgrade bar to its much-sought canopied business class/massage seats from 50,000 to 60,000 miles.

For those who travel coach, the good news is that the Minneapolis-based airline, apparently with an eye toward its lower-cost Asian competitors, has decided to maintain the present 60,000 miles needed to obtain free economy class passage for the same routes.

According to an airline source, Northwest was merely trying to match the industry's mileage award levels.

Good-bye, Shell Maya

THE DAYS of Shell Maya, the gasoline station at the fork of Buendia, Geronimo and HV de la Costa streets, are numbered.

The corner lot has been swapped by Ayala Land in exchange for the Fil-Estate Group's stake in the North Triangle property.

According to the grapevine, the gasoline station is now on a month-to-month lease, and that its stay would last no longer than two years given the desire of Fil-Estate to build a mixed-use condo complex on the property and ride the crest of the reviving market.

In addition to filling up gas tanks, the station has been a convenient U-turn shortcut for vehicles from Legaspi Village that are otherwise prohibited from turning left to Ayala from Salcedo Street.

The area has become a 24-hour neighborhood with the surge in 24/7 call center offices in RCBC Plaza and nearby buildings and in the still upcoming purpose-built Ayala buildings in front of the Makati Medical Center.

Sibling revelry

BONITO Singson, the younger brother of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson with whom he competes on "chick" points, is building a 200-room hotel-casino in Sinait town in partnership with Chinese investors.

According to the grapevine, a mainland Chinese group will manage the hotel whose main market will also be mainland Chinese tourists. The last town of Ilocos Sur before Ilocos Norte, Sinait is midway between Vigan and Laoag, the two Ilocos capitals.

And, if the grapevine is also correct, Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is a silent, but minority partner for the new venture.

Incidentally, Bonito's hotel is different and separate from the hotel-townhouse complex planned by Chavit in his Baluarte compound in Vigan, although Chavit himself has built a private beachfront retreat also in Sinait.

Groundbreaking for the Bonito hotel has already been scheduled for next month.

Heard through the grapevine

EVEN the local SONY BMG Records has not been spared by the worldwide and regional reorganizations being effected by the music giant.

Wally Chamsai has tendered his resignation as president; Rudy Tee, originally of BMG Records when it was still a separate company, is said to be in line as the country head.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

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JAC FILIPINAS PAWNSHOP INC. 100 C. Palanca St. Quiapo, Manila will sell all unredeemed pledges for the months of JUNE & JULY 2004 on Jan. 19, 2005 at 2pm. J: Lanuza Auctioneer (PDI - January 3, 2005)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late NONILON S. TRAJANO under Doc 145, Page 29, Book II Series of 2004 of Notary Public Atty Godofredo T. Liban of Quezon City, has been extrajudicially settled with waiver of renunciation of rights among his heirs as per Doc. No. 4246, Series of 1999 Service No. 4246 OR. 810 and authenticated by Consul General Generoso G. Calonge, Washington, D.C.
(PDI - Dec. 27, Jan. 3 & 4, 2005)

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IN RE: APPLICATION FOR AUTHORITY TO OPERATE AS AN INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC AIRFREIGHT FORWARDER
CONTAINER BRIDGE PHILS., INC.
Applicant.
CAB CASE NO. 25406
x-------------------------------x

NOTICE OF HEARING

Pursuant to the provisions of R.A. 776, as amended, notice is hereby given that **CONTAINER BRIDGE PHILS., INC.** has filed with the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) an application for Authority to Operate as an International and Domestic Airfreight Forwarder. The initial hearing of the above entitled case will be held on **12 January 2005 at 2:00 P.M.** at the Conference Room of the CAB, Old MIA Road, Pasay City, Metro Manila before the undersigned Hearing Officer, at which hearing the applicant shall present evidence.

The applicant is hereby required to have this Notice of Hearing published at least once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation, or that copies thereof and the application itself be sent to existing CAB certified airfreight forwarders either by personal service or by registered mail with return card at least three (3) days before the scheduled hearing.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition on or before the date of the hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant, and appear at the hearing with such evidence as may be proper under the premises. Failure on the part of any interested party to file its opposition on time and appear at the hearing shall be construed as a waiver of its right to be heard and the Civil Aeronautics Board shall proceed to hear and decide this application in its merit.

Let a copy of the application and this Notice be posted at the CAB Bulletin Board beginning today.

14 December 2004
Pasay City, Philippines

(Sgd.) MANUEL A. MORENTE, JR.
Chief, Legal & Enforcement Division

(PDI – Dec. 20, 27, 2004 & Jan. 3, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
OLD MIA ROAD, PASAY CITY,
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IN RE: PETITION FOR AUTHORITY TO ACT AS GENERAL SALES AGENT FOR AIR CANADA
SUPERSONIC SERVICES, INC.
Petitioner.
CAB CASE NO. 25392
x-------------------------------x

NOTICE OF HEARING

Pursuant to the provisions of R.A. 776, as amended, notice is hereby given that **SUPERSONIC SERVICES, INC.** has filed with the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) a petition for Authority to act as General Sales Agent for Air Canada. The initial hearing of the above entitled case will be held on **13 January 2005 at 2:00 P.M.** at the Conference Room of the CAB, Old MIA Road, Pasay City, Metro Manila before the undersigned Hearing Officer, at which hearing, the petitioner shall present evidence.

The petitioner is hereby required to have this Notice of Hearing published at least once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation.

Parties opposed to the granting of the petition must file their written opposition on or before the date of the hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the petitioner, and appear at the hearing with such evidence as may be proper under the premises. Failure on the part of any interested party to file its opposition on time and appear at the hearing shall be construed as a waiver of its right to be heard and the Civil Aeronautics Board shall proceed to hear and decide this petition on its merit.

Let a copy of the application and this Notice be posted at the CAB Bulletin Board beginning today.

13 December 2004
Pasay City, Philippines

(Sgd.) MANUEL A. MORENTE, JR.
Chief, Legal & Enforcement Division

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ASSET DISPOSAL PROJECT
NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Dilman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID

"AS-IS-WHERE-IS" FOR THE SALE OF NPC TUGBOAT NO. 2 & 3

DATE OF BIDDING: January 20, 2005

The National Power Corporation will received sealed bids on an "AS-IS-WHERE-IS" basis for the assets described below:

ITEM DESCRIPTION		MIN. BID PRICE
LOT 1: One (1) unit Unused Tugboat, 3000 PS (Tugboat No. 3)		P 38,685,000.00
Length (Overall, without rubber fender/sheat	: 33.30 meter (approx.)	
Breadth (molded)	: 9.20 meter	
Depth (molded)	: 3.90 meter	
Designed Load Draught (molded)	: 2.90 meter	
Gross Tonnage (International)	: 310.00 tons	
Loading Capacity	: 80.00 tons (approx.)	
MAIN DIESEL ENGINES		
Make	: Mitsubishi	
No. of Units	: 2 units	
No. of Cylinder	: 6 cylinders	
Max. Continuous Output	: 1500 PS @1150 rpm	
Normal Output	: 1350 PS @1110 rpm	
Acquired	: 1998	
Location	: Naga, Cebu	
LOT 2: One (1) unit Tugboat (Tugboat No. 2)		P 38,773,450.00
Length (Overall)	: 30.40 meters	
Beam (Molded)	: 7.40 meters	
Draft Maximum	: 2.30 meters	
Gross Tonnage	: 180 tons	
Main Diesel Engine, 2 Units	: Detroit 16V-92N 626 PS @ 1,800 RPM	
Generator Engine, 2 Units	: Detroit, Type 4-71N 70KW @ 1,800 RPM	
Rated Output	: 1,200 HP	
Manufacturer	: President Marine	
Date Manufactured	: 1994	
Location	: Naga, Cebu	

Interested eligible bidders may obtain bidding documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Five Thousand Pesos (PhP5,000.00)** at the Materials Management Department Office, Ground Floor, Building No. 1, National Power Corporation, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

Bids will be opened in the presence of bidders' representatives at **10:00 AM** on **January 20, 2005** at the NPC Solarium, NPC Head Office. Bids shall be accompanied by a Bid Bond (Cash or Manager's Check only) of not less than **ten percent (10%)** of the total amount to bid. The Power Sector Asset and Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation have concurred with the bidding process and clearance for the disposal was duly approved.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to waive any required informality, and to accept such bids that is most advantageous to the Government.

Issuance of bidding documents is on **January 3-15, 2005.** Additional information may be obtained from Asset Disposal Project office at telephone nos. 922-3970, and 921-3541 loc. 5582, or e-mail us at lcarabelo@napocor.gov.ph.

(Sgd.) LEVI C. ARABELO
Manager, BNPP Preservation & Disposal Project
& Chairman, Task Force for the Disposal of Tugboats 2&3

(PDI–Dec. 29, 2004, Jan. 3 & 4, 2005)

ASSET DISPOSAL PROJECT
NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID

"AS-IS-WHERE-IS" FUEL TANK BARGE "T-228"

DATE OF BIDDING: 10 AM / JANUARY 20, 2005

The National Power Corporation will receive sealed bids on an "AS-IS-WHERE-IS" basis for the sale of the asset described below:

ITEM / DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
Lot 1 - One (1) Unit, FUEL BARGE (Non-propelled), "T-228" Material of Hull : Steel Length Overall (LOA) : 82.00 meters Length between Perpendiculars (LWL) : 81.26 meters Breadth (molded) : 25 26 meters Number of Deck : Single Gross Tonnage (Approx) : 2,610 tons Net Tonnage (Approx) : 2,591 tons Fuel Barge Capacity : 40,000 barrels Date Launched : July 17, 1993 Shipbuilder Hull No. : 63	Batangas Coal-Fired Thermal Power Plant, Calaca, Batangas	P29,965,000.00

Interested eligible bidders may obtain bidding documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Two Thousand Pesos (PhP2,000.00)** at the Materials Management Department office, Ground Floor, Building No. 1, National Power Corporation, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

Bids will be opened in the presence of bidders' representatives at **10:00 AM** on **JANUARY 20, 2005** at the NPC Solarium, NPC Head Office. Bids shall be accompanied by a Bid Bond (Cash or Manager's Check only) of not less than **ten percent (10%)** of the total amount of bid. The Power Sector Asset and Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation have concurred with the bidding process and clearance for the disposal was duly approved.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to wave any informality, and to accept such bids as may be deemed most advantageous to the Government.

Issuance of bidding documents is on January 3-15, 2005. For additional information, please call Asset Disposal Project at telephone nos. 922-3970, and 921-3541 loc. 5582, or e-mail us at lcarabelo@napocor.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **LEVI C. ARABELO**
Manager, BNPP Preservation & Disposal Project
& Chairman, Task Force on the Disposal of Fuel Barge

(PDI--Dec. 29, 2004, Jan 3 & 4, 2005)

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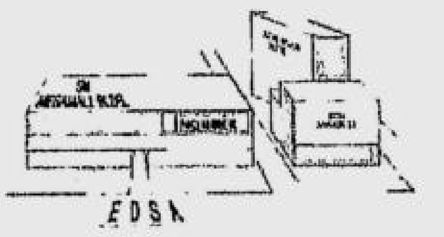

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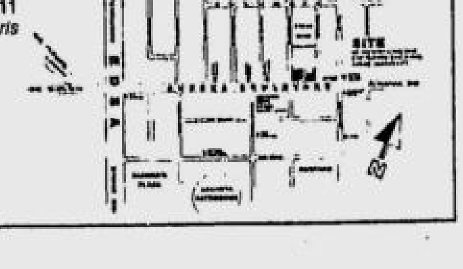

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His bereaved parents **Rodrigo "Boy"** and **Glory**; brother and sisters **Richie, Richelle** and **Risha**, sister-in-law **Liza**, nephews **Reese** and **Rain**, other relatives and friends request to join them in praying for his eternal happiness in Heaven.

His remains lie in state at Nacional Memorial Homes, Araneta Ave., Quezon City. There will be a mass every night at 7 p.m.

Interment will be on January 5, 2005 at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, Quezon City after the 8:30 a.m. Mass at the St. Paul's the Apostle's Church at Timog Ave., corner Mother Ignacia Street, Quezon City.

In Loving Memory
ON THE FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY
of our Dearly Beloved

WILFRIDO MAÑAGO CASTRO, M.D.

(UP Medicine Class of 1942)
of Jaro, Iloilo City and Mabalacat, Pampanga
February 11, 1918 – January 1, 2004

His family and loved ones request relatives, friends and pious readers to join them in praying for the eternal repose of his soul.

Holy masses will be offered at the following churches on *January 3, 2005:*

Angelicum Chapel, Jaro, Iloilo City
St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Jaro, Iloilo City
Sta. Maria Church, Iloilo City
St. Anne's Parish, Molo, Iloilo City
St. Clement's Church, Lapaz, Iloilo City
Dingle Catholic Parish Church, Dingle, Iloilo
St. Joseph Church, Pinole, California, USA
On *February 11, 2005:*
Jaro Cathedral, Jaro, Iloilo City

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

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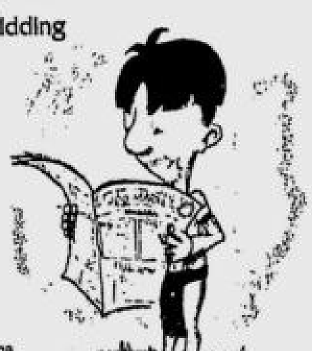

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Sharp showcases innovative appliances at home expo

SHARP showcased its line of innovative appliances at the recently concluded Modern Home Expo, the country's first international finishing, furnishings, lighting, and entertainment, and lifestyle exhibition.

Engineers, builders, and designers visited the exposition, held at the Philippine Trade and Training Center in Roxas Boulevard, to check out the latest products and services offered by world leaders in the field of building and construction, architecture and interior design, as well as home furnishing and appliances, among others. Throughout the event, guests who were on the look out for top-of-the-line appliances frequented Sharp's booth, featuring air conditioners, air purifiers, refrigerators, humidifiers, and dehumidifiers, power-packed with the innovative Plasmacluster Ion Technology.

A presentation on Sharp's Plasmacluster Ion Technology was conducted during the opening of the Modern Home 'Expo to enlighten industry builders and home designers on what it is and how it contributes to home safety and public health. Rochelle Blancaflor, Sharp research analyst, showed how this technology protects individuals from disease-causing viruses, fungi, allergens, and odor present in the environment.

According to Blancaflor, the Plamacluster Ion Technology is a unique appliance feature that has been proven to be effective in controlling certain air-borne viruses, mold spores and other harmful elements. Its special air purifying system hunts down unfavorable elements in the air then surrounds them with Plasmacluster ions, which break down air-borne water and oxygen molecules, creating a balance of positive and negative ions. With this, hazardous elements are inactivated, preventing them from posing grave health threats.

Clinical studies conducted abroad have shown that Sharp's Plasmacluster Ion technology is able to neutralize the polio virus, coxsackie virus (summer cold), flu virus, and the feline corona virus - a member of the corona viridae family, which has been identified as the culprit behind Sars.

The power and effectivity of Sharp's Plasmacluster Ion technology were witnessed and appreciated by many of the expo exhibitors and guests who stayed at the lounge area/smoking room. Sharp air conditioners and purifiers were strategically set up in this area to help maintain a clean, fresh and safe atmosphere.

According to Blancaflor, "the Plasmacluster is a groundbreaking and valuable technology ideal for homes, hospitals, schools, and other public places to ward off detrimental environmental elements and the diseases they trigger and transmit."

8TH DSAP NATIONAL CONVENTION

The Drugstores Association of the Philippines recently concluded its 8th DSAP National Convention last Sept 8 to 10, at the CAP-John Hay, Baguio City. Shown in photo is Enciso (2nd from left) of Pharmacee Corner, recipient of the DSAP Quality Award for the Single Store Category. With him are Mario Jusi of the Dept of Trade and Industry; Gloria De Chavez, chair of DSAP Board; Celia Carlos, DSAP national president; Carlos Ejercito, chief operating officer of United Laboratories, and Susan Uy, chair of the DSAP Awards Committee. The DSAP Quality Awards is jointly sponsored by the Dept. of Trade's Center for Industrial Competitiveness and United Laboratories, and recognizes excellence based on seven-point DSAP-Baldridge criteria that measures organizational and operational performance among qualifying drugstore members.

Java Outsourcing
Challenges and Opportunities in the Japanese Market
MCEA MOA Contract Signing
Hotel Nikko Philippines
October 28, 2004
PSIA

JAVA OUTSOURCING IN JAPAN

The Philippine Software Industry Association (PSIA) signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Metropolitan Computer Engineers Association (MCEA), a Japanese IT association based in Tokyo, to explore Java outsourcing opportunities in Japan last Oct. 28, at the Dusit Hotel Nikko. Signing the contract (from left) is Kazue Hiraide, MCEA lawyer; Yoshitaka Sugihara, MCEA EVP; Greg Lainez, PSIA president; and Menchie Aragon, PSIA director.

TACO BELL SPREADS THE MESSAGE

Taco Bell Philippines joined hands with MTV Staying Alive Music Summit in empowering the youth against the spiraling of HIV/AIDS cases, to protect themselves, fight stigma and discrimination. Known for its brand power to youngsters, Taco Bell was confident that it would help communicate MTV Summit's message effectively. As special treat to its customers, the world's number #1 Mexican restaurant gave away free MTV concert tickets. With a minimum purchase of P400, patrons got free tickets at Taco Bell Gateway Mall beside the Araneta Coliseum. In photo are (from left) MTV jock KC Montero, Taco Bell marketing officer Isabel Pizarro and MTV Philippines corporate affairs and communications director Rod Nepomuceno.

MUSIC SUMMIT

Feet care a must for occasional athletes

MORE elite athletes are suffering from serious foot injuries, according to a study presented by Dr. Robert Anderson during the American Orthopedic and Ankle Society meet in Seattle this year.

Dr. Anderson said today's athletes are now physically stronger, bigger and faster than the previous generations of athletes. Hence, their feet will have to cope with greater pressure in the midst of sporting activity.

Unfortunately, not even common individuals who enjoy sports during their leisure time can be spared from foot injuries, which include even the serious ones. And it takes a lot of sense to take care of ones feet to avoid injuries with the following reminders:

Always wear comfortable shoes that are appropriate for your sporting activity. Comfortable and appropriate shoes mean that they are not too tight nor too small and are equipped with a firm heel counter, good arch support, and appropriate heel height. Also pay close attention to the materials that make the shoe. Overall, shoes should conform to your feet and its pressure areas. Feel your feet as it will tell you soon enough if the shoe does not conform to your physical activity.

It's basic that occasional athletes should thoroughly stretch and warm-up during their physical activity or sports. Most common injuries are due to the fact that muscles needed were not properly warmed up. Gradually increasing the physical activity is important for the muscles to get used to it later on.

There are orthotic devices available in the market. If pain subsists despite the choice of the right shoe and proper warm-ups, then ask your podiatrist for advice.

Should injury set in, treat it immediately and remember "R.I.C.E". That means: a) Rest by taking off the shoe and ceasing from the physical activity that is causing the pressure for the meantime. b) Ice wrapped in cloth or in an icepack is helpful. But never apply ice directly to the injured area as the pain will only get worse. It is advisable to apply ice near the area to ensure cool blood flows into it and reduce swelling. If pain persists, discontinue use and contact your doctor. c) Compression may limit swelling and support the injured area as long as it is not too tight. It must be applied to the entire foot by starting at the toes going to the ankle. d) Elevation also reduces swelling and pain as reduces gravity to the injured area. e) In the case of calluses, never clip or trim them off with a razor blade or a knife. For blisters, keep the area clean and they should not be pricked to avoid infection unless they are very painful or receive continued pressure while walking.

But as always, an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Along with wearing comfortable and appropriate shoes, one must be careful on choosing socks to pair it with. Burlington's Shock XT is a feet-friendly sock, which has padded portions set on areas of the feet that receive immense pressure during a sporting activity. The scientific design of Shock XT makes it the perfect socks for athletes who continuously train and compete on hard surfaces. The Shock XT currently has three specific designs made especially for basketball, badminton and running, sports that involve a lot of jumping and running that can easily damage the hips, knees and joints especially during hard impact landing.

No less than the Shell cager Rich Alvarez in the Philippine Basketball Association and Ateneo badminton star Irene Chiu attest to the protection that Burlington Shock XT provides their feet. Former PBA coach and long-time endorser Norman Black also vouches for Burlington's quality.

Burlington Shock XT is available at all SM Malls and athletic shops nationwide.

FQPI, GLOBAL BRANDS SIGN MOA

First Quadrant and W Brown join forces as FQPI owners and Global Brands Co Inc officers recently signed a memorandum of agreement that will bolster their partnership in the marketing and distribution of quality and durable footwear brand W Brown in the Philippines and to other countries recently tapped by FQPI . Shown (from left) are: Mitch G. Lim, GBCI FGD sales director; Doyee T. Tumpalan, FQPI president and CEO; Socrates SD Tumpalan, FQPI chair; Ray N. Canilao, GBCI FGD managing director and Carol S. Yu, GBCI chief finance officer.

BPI endorser, wows Fil-Am crowd in USA

BPI sponsored "Night of the Champions" concert held at the Civic Center Plaza in San Francisco, California last Sept. 24. The concert was organized by ABS-CBN's The Filipino Channel (TFC) as handog-pasasalamat to all its loyal cable subscribers near and within the Bay area. All TFC subscribers were entitled to free tickets to the concert. Star-in-a-Million champion Erik Santos enthralled the audience with well-loved ballads and his winning song, "This is The Moment". He and the other new breed of singers in the concert proved to have popular following in the US judging from the 10,000-12,000 strong crowd that braved the cool, chilly winds of San Francisco, and kept shouting for more. Erik is also BPI's singer-interpreter for its theme song for the Expat Pinoys, entitled "Abutin Mo Ang Iyong Pangarap", an original composition. BPI attracted the Fil-Am audience to its booth, with useful materials explaining the Bank's mission program for all Pinoys overseas and lots of giveaway prizes that included autographed t-shirts of Erik Santos' Express Remit Campaign for BPI and photo session opportunity with Erik Santos and the other stars of the concert.

PR GAZ HAUS LPG CONVENIENT STORE IN CAVITE

PR Gaz Haus LPG Convenient stores is continuously creating its presence in the Province of Cavite. Considered as one of the biggest urbanized area in Luzon, PR Gaz Haus has recently opened its 14th store strategically located at J.M. Loyola St., Bgy. Mabuhay, Carmona, Cavite. With only a single refilling plant in 2001, now it has subsidiaries of four refilling plant in Navotas, Zambales, Cavite and Pangasinan. PR Gaz haus Holdings Inc is located at 1604 The Orient Square Bldg. Emerald Ave. Ortigas Center Pasig City. Soon to open for franchising, for more details call (02)687-1703 or visit www.prgazhaus.com.

PLDT BUSINESS

PLDT, ST. SCHOLASTICA SIGNING

PLDT and St. Scholastica College recently signed an I-Gate Contract for PLDT. I-Gate is PLDT's premium Internet gateway service that provides you high speed, reliable and managed connectivity to the global Internet. Shown in photo are (seated from left): Cesar M. Enriquez, PLDT-FVP/corporate business operations officer; Vicente Pijano III, director and consultant, DoIT head, academic computing head; (standing, same order) PLDT's Jerameel Azurin, product manager; Javier Lagdameo, business head-Broadband A; Patricia Palma Gil, relationship manager; St. Scholastica's Dori Salubayba, institutional teacher evaluation; Andrew Ambubuyog, administrative computing coordinator and Jose Mari Elicano, technical and networking coordinator.

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BUSINESS Monday

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Execs' woes in 2004 and hopes for 2005

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

WILL 2005 be a good year for the Philippines? Everybody hopes so, particularly the businessmen. We asked several Filipino executives what their laments are for the year that passed and their hopes for this year. These executives come from various sectors.

Gabriel C. Singson, former Bangko Sentral Governor, Grepalife chair

We knew the fiscal and debt problems facing the country and the solution but not enough was done to solve it. Measures can be in place before the fiscal and debt problems result sin a crisis of confidence in the market. If that happens we will have a debt crisis.

Felipe Gozon, president GMA -7

We were fortunate that we did not encounter serious problems in 2004. We hope that 2005 ushers in economic progress and stability for our country.

GOZON

Jesus Francisco, president, Meralco

Hopes for '05—Sacrifice, hard world, *tulong-tulong*, leadership and a supportive media. Woes of '04—Negativism. Finger-pointing. Divisiveness.

Jose S. Concepcion, former Trade and Industry Secretary

Woes of 2004—the cynicism, hopelessness, sense of resignation of the majority of Filipinos. The year closed with disaster and yet the best of the Filipinos rich and poor showed an outpouring of love, solidarity and true *bayanihan* spirit. The meaning of this Christmas showed that the Filipino value of family and *simbang gabi* had more meaning and joy and a praying Filipino was truly the pride of our nation. 2005 will see new beginnings, faith in the Filipino. Each of us can make the difference. Together in solidarity we draw strength and show the world the Filipino can. You make the difference. Be involved. Be the solution, not the problem.

SINGSON

Jose L. Cuisia, president Philamlife

Our woes of 2004 were the continued depreciation of the peso and rising inflation rate. Our hopes for 2005 are a lower fiscal deficit and higher GDP growth rate.

Gerry Ablaza, president Globe Telecom

My hope in the New Year is that all of us commit 100 percent of our energies to achieving and sustaining excellence in whatever we do. So that collectively, we can help raise the vibrancy and competitiveness of our country."

Art Aguilar, general manager, National Development Co.

Woes—high energy prices, mounting public debt, low business morale although significant improvement in [reduction of cases of] kidnapping. Hopes—public revenues will increase, more infrastructure investments, improved credit rating, greater foreign investment appetite.

Ferdinand de la Cruz, VP Globe Telecom

2004 was a year of many challenges for the country in many respects. I hope we can strengthen the economic fundamentals in 2005 and build momentum for sustainable growth that will benefit a greater number of Filipinos.

Jaime Laya, founder of KPMG Laya Mananghaya and Co.

I guess things could have been better. But again, they could have been worse. Best not to brood over spilt milk but to move on and make the best of what one cannot change.

Michael L. Romero, president, Harbour Centre

Because of the elections and the fiscal deficit, the uncertainties in the Philippines, investor confidence was nowhere in sight. With the Supreme Court upholding the Mining Law, this signals a pro-business approach by the Philippines which for 2005 hopefully would give back the foreign investor confidence. Then the real money would come back again to the Philippines.

Joey Bermudez, president, Chinatrust Phils. Inc.

Woes of 2004; The bitterly contested election, the belated acknowledgment of the fiscal problems, the emasculated tax bills, the destructive typhoons, and the tsunamis in South Asia. Hopes for 2005: A focused (not distracted) leadership, an improved global economy, a disaster-free year, a real (not cosmetic) solution to the fiscal problem.

ABLAZA

ROMERO

Butch Jimenez, VP, PLDT

We can't do much about 2004 because that's over and done with. We can learn from what we experience both good and bad and forge for us and our country a great 2005. For the new year, I hope God raises 12 Filipinos who can inspire our countrymen every month of the year with their achievements, stories, character and integrity. The world has yet to see what an inspired Philippines can do.

Peter Coyiuto, president of First Guarantee Life Assurance Co. Inc.

Woes—only three million Filipinos are paying for individual life insurances versus 20 million cell phone users. By 2005, hopefully more Filipinos will know the value of protecting the future of their families.

Nelia Cruz-Sarcol, owner, CIE Global Colleges

The deepening hopelessness in the hearts of the poor Filipinos. My wish for the New Year is for utterly rich billionaire Filipino families to adopt an impoverished *barangay* each in a far flung area and help the people come up with a holistic development plan for their adopted *barangays* and fund it themselves as a a family legacy project. That will be the greatest legacy they can truly be proud of.

Elizabeth Reyes, president Healthway Medical Clinics

2004 was a year for major decision making for many Filipinos faced with trials, calamities and misfortunes. The following year always holds a lot of opportunities to learn the strength to move on—that life's always blessed. 2005 will bring a lot of blessings if we remain in our faith and create a positive outlook in life.

Miguel Ramos, president, Aspac Advertising

Woes for 2004? The enduring economic and political challenges experienced by our country. Hopes for 2005? That creativity and passion drive us to find innovative solutions to our age old problems.

Lito Bunag, Ad Systems Inc.

2004 woes included endless crises, the country couldn't seem to get out of the run. 2005 hopes—everybody to pitch in, we help ourselves by helping others.

Albert Garcia, consultant, head of Garsworth Marketing Corp.

For most of 2004, people were woefully sucked into a self-fulfilling state of economic depression. Hopefully in 2005, we snap out of apathy and complacency.

COYIUTO

Roxanne Ang Farillas, owner, Plains and Prints clothes shop

The disasters that killed many people in 2005. Hoping that in 2005 there will be lower oil prices and a better and more stable economy.

RAMOS

Edd Fuentes, Fuentes Publicity Network Inc.

Woes—business uncertainty. Hopes—stability, more clients willing to spend more.

Bobby Caballero of Caballero and Associates

Woes of '04? Failure of the government to provide and maintain a stimulating business atmosphere. Hopes for '05? Better education for the poorer majority, less rhetorics from President Gloria.

SARCOL

The cerebral manager

MAPping THE FUTURE

By. Niceto S. Poblador

FOR as long as I can remember, I have been chided by my colleagues in the management field for being too "conceptual" in my approach to management and management education. Indeed, even as a young assistant professor many, many years back, I have strongly maintained, as I still do, that the effectiveness of managerial choices depends in good measure on their firm theoretical footings. The formulation and analysis of problems or issues, the identification of feasible options, and the successful implementation of the chosen course of action cannot be done effectively, systematically and with dispatch without a conceptual framework to guide the decision maker.

Experience no longer the best teacher

Under more placid times such as those that prevailed up until the '60s and the '70s, knowing what to do and how that can be learned from experience and, vicariously, from the experience of others. In today's world of rapid and unpredictable change, however, "knowing what to do is not enough," as a management expert once wrote. Today, experience is no longer the best teacher. What might have been appropriate then may no longer be so now. Moreover, in a world characterized by increasing complexity, most decision situations faced by managers defy easy labeling. In today's world of business, there are few well-defined categories of management problems in which standard management principles or decision rules apply. More likely, each decision situation is unique and requires an equally unique solution (if indeed there is one!) It is precisely for these reasons that I have been dismissive of the inclination of managers to follow best practices, or to benchmark organizational performance criteria on industry standards. How, one might ask, can a company develop a competitive edge over its rivals if its strategies are based in part on what the competition does?

Historical emphasis on behavioral skills

Management has long been defined as "getting things done through people." It still is, of course, and people skills are therefore an essential ingredient of organizational leadership. However, important as they are, behavioral skills are certainly not the end-all and be-all of good corporate stewardship in these uncertain times.

I do not begrudge my colleagues for advocating a management style characterized by "living and leading with passion," for total personal commitment is truly a trait that marks a potentially successful person in any field of endeavor. Nor do I belittle such labels as "Level 5" or bridging leadership style, because a leader's role is indeed that of connecting people together and to a common vision. Being a transformational leader in a world of unpredictable change makes a good deal of sense. But there is more to effective management in today's world of knowledge. Much more!

Growing importance of cognitive skills

Traditional management routinely distinguishes between leadership, administration, and management, and describes situations in which each role is appropriate. In today's complex, varied and dynamic world of business, such definitional hairsplitting makes little sense. In a volatile environment, a firm's CEO or COO has to be all three. To be a manager, one has to be a leader and an administrator as well. The former requires the usual human (or motivational) skills and the latter implies a good deal of technological (or "how to") skills. In today's knowledge-driven world, a third set of skills has become increasingly important: cognitive (or analytical) skills.

As organizations become increasingly information—or knowledge-intensive in their production processes, and as the decision environment becomes increasingly varied, there is a need for a new breed of managers who understand the complex dynamics that underpin knowledge problems. As a noted management teacher once observed: "The capacity to manage human intellect—and to transform intellectual output into a service or a group of services embodied in a product—is fast becoming the critical executive skill." To which I may add: It takes competence to manage organizational competencies.

A case in point

Among the hottest management issues today is network management, or what is more commonly known as managing the value chain. The what's and how's of value maximization strategies can be culled from Fortune, the MIT Sloan Management Review and the Harvard Business Review, and even in the business pages of most broadsheets. The underlying theories, or the why's, are discussed in greater depth in the pages of the more esoteric management journals such as the Journal of Business, the Academy of Management Journal, and the Cambridge Journal of Economics.

Theoretical discussions of problems relating to network management draw heavily from theories collectively known in academic circles as The New Institutional Economics. Among these are the Principal-Agent (PA) theory of the firm and Transactions Cost Economics (TCE). In these discussions, specific management issues such as outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions, labor contracting, and organizational design are explained in terms of concepts developed in the PA and TCE literatures. These include, inter alia, adverse selection, post-contractual opportunism (or "moral hazard"), information asymmetries, and the informativeness principle.

My thesis

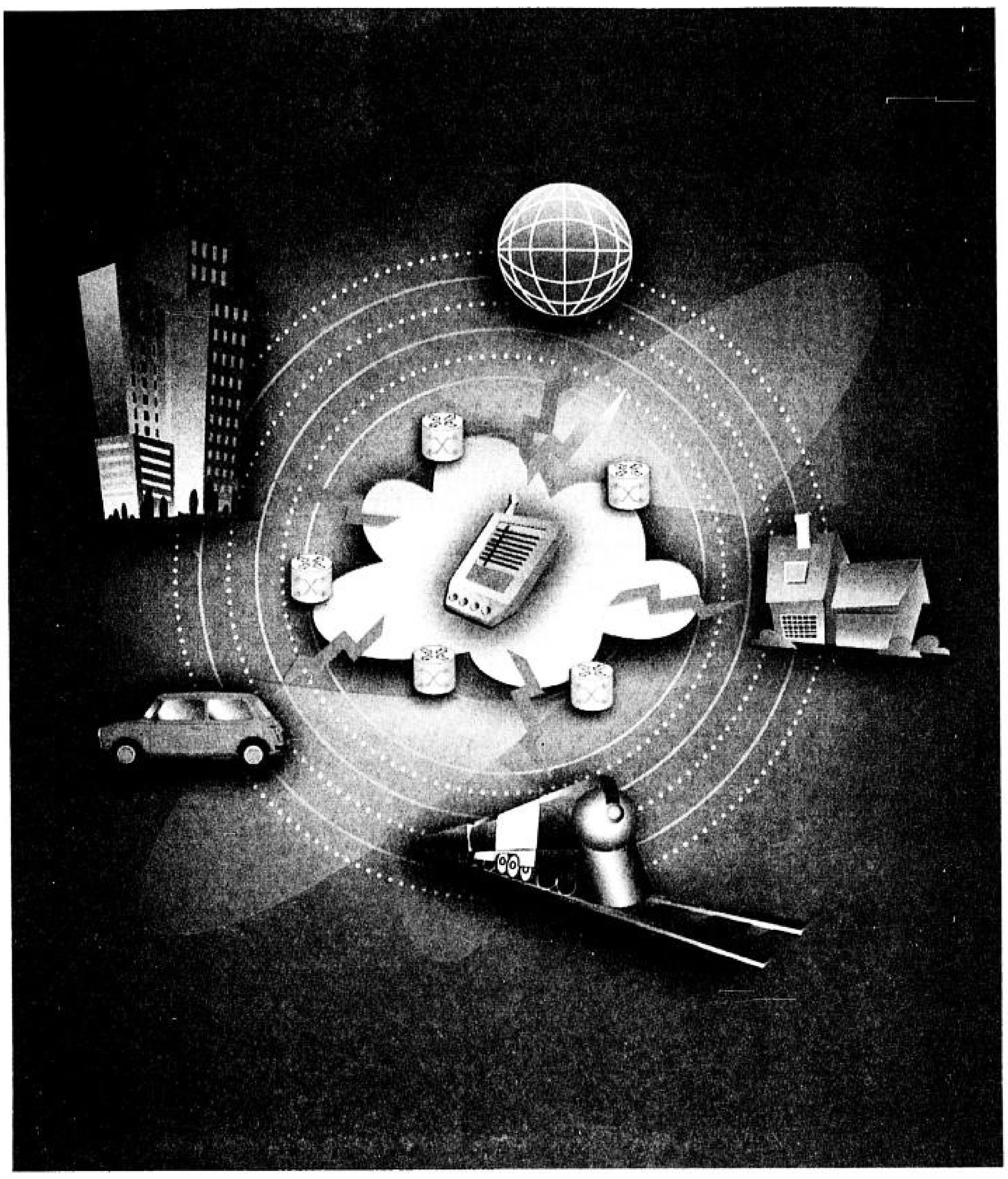
I realize that these fancy terms sound like senseless gibberish to many. But I strongly believe that managers in the New Economy should endeavor to accumulate a satchelful of such concepts to serve as a "genetic pool" of basic ideas which can be combined in any manner whatsoever in dealing with the infinite variety of problems and issues that they may confront. In this way, they can formulate their own unique solutions and need not rely on hackneyed decision rules that have long outlived their usefulness.

Today's manager must have the ability to apply knowledge in dealing with knowledge issues. This ability requires knowledge of a higher order.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is a knowledge management consultant, member of the MAP, former Professor of University of the Philippines, and current Professor at the Baguio Colleges Foundation. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

3G, VoIP, outsourcing head 2005 trends

By Alex Villafania and Erwin Oliva
Contributors



HAVING survived the year 2004, local information technology executives are more upbeat about 2005 despite worries about the health of the Philippine economy for the coming year.

The year 2004 became difficult because corporate and consumer high-tech spending only picked up toward the end of the year. Still, some local IT companies have reported growth and expansion despite last year's hard times. As expected, big business came from the booming call center industry and the emerging business process outsourcing (BPO) market.

Moreover, the mobile telephone industry remained strong in 2004, as the number of mobile phone subscribers went past 30 million. Mobile services are also evolving, with innovations like ringback tunes making their local debut.

Meanwhile, the Philippines also saw the entry of more massively multiplayer online role playing games (MMORPGs) last year, following the success of pioneering game publisher Level-Up! which operates the popular online game "Ragnarok."

Last year also saw companies and government pushing relatively new technologies such as voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and third-generation (3G) mobile service. However, regulatory issues have forced operators and technology providers to shelve plans of making these technologies available to the local market. This year, though, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) hopes to open up public discussions on these controversial technologies.

With the close of 2004, IT players see a better year for their business, and market research firm International Data Corp.'s report on improved IT spending in the Philippines reflects this trend.

For some local firms, 2004 was a year of slight hiccups as the election season pushed consumer spending toward the latter part of the year. This, however, was anticipated by many technology firms.

Trends for 2005 seem to go toward the expansion of wireless communications, voice-over-IP and software development, according to IT companies. Still, the local outsourcing industry is still foreseen to continue growing with an ever-increasing demand from the United States. Online games and multimedia services on mobile networks are also expected to emerge next year.

As the year 2005 unravels, Infotech asked local technology companies to give us a snapshot of what they think are in the offing for the high-tech industry.

Microsoft Philippines managing director Antonio Javier summed it up briefly: "We are pretty upbeat about the Philippine market. There will be some challenges especially if investor confidence goes down (this is highly dependent on Standard & Poor's rating) and if inflation increases."

2005 OUTLOOK

Both factors, he said, will affect the purchasing power of consumers and of small- and medium-sized businesses.

3G and VoIP

IT executives agree that 3G and VoIP will attract more attention from the industry as well as government.

"Third-generation wireless communication (3G) and voice over Internet Protocol will most likely vie for market attention," said Ronnie Latinazo, country manager for storage firm EMC (Philippines), noting that the market next year will be looking at new technologies that would provide faster, broader and more cost-effective solutions for both the enterprise and end-user markets.

There will be major deployments of 3G technologies next year as communications carriers in other countries start expanding their offerings to feature-rich services, according to Alan Halden, president of the Global Mobile Suppliers Association.

These deployments could include wideband CDMA and EDGE, both offering faster mobile networks on which new services could ride.

Halden said a level playing field among those involved in the telecommunications business would augur well for the industry. He stressed that carriers must consider where the need for 3G services would be strong, and make sure prices are affordable enough to give access to everyone.

Meanwhile, as the Philippines waits for the NTC to make a major, if not a drastic, move on VoIP regulation, a massive build-out of VoIP networks is expected in other countries across the region.

Brad Gray, vice president of Juniper Networks Asia South, said Asian countries will begin deploying VoIP networks next year.

In 2004, the NTC was stumped by arguments between carriers and service providers, resulting in limited deployment of VoIP to enterprise-level companies. Nonetheless, Gray is still optimistic that VoIP would soon be opened up to the mass market as well.

Software and outsourcing

IT executives also believe that the software business will continue to outpace the hardware business in terms of revenues in 2005.

The performance of several software providers in 2004 is a barometer of the ability of the software industry to sustain growth even though the worldwide economy is struggling. Examples of these companies that made it big in 2004—and are forecasted to do better in 2005—are Microsoft, IBM, Oracle, SAP, Computer Associates, Electronic Arts, People Soft and EMC.

Because of this growth—and unfortunately, because of the relative ease of copying software—the software industry still faces difficulties in 2005, as reflected by the 72-percent piracy rate in the Philippines.

Ronald Chua, chair of the Business Software Alliance, said copyright protection will still be an issue in 2005. However, he expects increased awareness from companies and end-users on the importance of using licensed software in 2005.

Microsoft Philippines' Javier agreed.

"We are happy to note that there seems to be a growing appreciation for intellectual property rights among the public these days. Our commercial original equipment manufacturer (COEM) business experienced huge growth (in the second half of 2004)," said Javier.

COEM pertains to Microsoft's business with local system builders. The software company has seen steady business growth in the Philippines.

"But since our fiscal year is from July to June, we're currently in the middle of the year. Still, we've been experiencing steady growth here in the Philippines. Our headcount has doubled (from 2002) and we are actually expecting to grow by 10 percent this fiscal year," the executive added.

Javier said growth areas for the local industry remain focused on services, which include call centers, business process outsourcing, manufacturing and retail.

Similar to the software industry, growth of the outsourcing business in the Philippines will continue to see an uptrend in 2005.

Computer manufacturer HP and telco equipment maker Nortel are among those that are cashing in on the outsourcing industry with their services.

HP Philippines Country Manager Nilo Cruz said they expect further growth in the call center and BPO areas, as the Philippines continues to be an alternative destination to India for this type of service.

On the other end, Tony Pio De Roda, head of Nortel Philippines, said BPO and call center outsourcing will continue to be very strong and will contribute significantly to the Philippine economy in general.

A local software engineering company also expects more "good news" for the IT industry in 2005.

"We expect about 50-percent year-on-year growth in revenues as well as headcount (in 2005). I also expect more good news for the Philippine IT industry, especially for companies engaged in providing e-services for the global market," said Joey Gurango, chief executive officer of Webworks OS.

Meanwhile, Raymond Ricafort, owner and franchiser of Netopia—the largest Internet café chain in the Philippines—believes that IT services and the outsourcing business will continue to generate additional revenue and jobs for the Philippines.

Ricafort, who is also president of Digital Paradise Inc., said his company is preparing "for an even more aggressive expansion program in 2005."

"Given the increasing number of Internet users and the improving relevance of the Internet in people's lives, we believe that our expansion is both timely and necessary given our long-term strategy," he said.

Brave predictions

Predictions are often dangerous. But Kar Wai Wong and Bernard Yu, chief solution architect and chief executive, respectively, of local IT firm Infoman, offered their brave predictions for the local IT industry in 2005.

As most IT executives have said, contact center services will continue growing, albeit at a more modest pace. Service providers, they said, will put more emphasis on business process outsourcing. More multinationals will consider establishing their back-office operations in the Philippines (following the examples of Procter & Gamble, Citibank, Caltex and Accenture).

Wong and Yu also said that huge IT projects and significant spending will still come from the government and public services sector. Government IT initiatives will also start becoming more concerted and there will be better overall directions in terms of IT due to efforts of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology.

The executives add that businesses will be more willing to invest in and adopt enterprise resource planning solutions, including financials and other business solutions. Many companies have put such projects on hold in the past two years. Some companies are looking at replacing their existing system or for reimplementation.

"In mid-2005, J.D. Edwards customers will better understand and decide on their future with Oracle," the executives said. "More applications will be deployed to remote sites, home users and mobile users due to the faster pace of business and low-cost broadband Internet connections. Many IT initiatives will include extending applications to support such access. Related to this, more applications will be Web-enabled to support employees, customers and suppliers."

Companies will be more security-conscious, as more servers are connected to the Internet (for remote access). Most will invest in firewalls, virtual private network appliances and anti-virus products. However, more serious investments and more holistic approaches to security are not expected in 2005. Wong and Yu also predict that most companies will deal with security reactively this year.

"Web-deployed applications, both packaged and custom-developed, will start to support the Firefox browser," Wong and Yu said. "Linux will move beyond Web, e-mail and file servers into application and database servers, especially in Asian countries like the Philippines. Majority of companies and government agencies will accept Linux as a viable alternative to Windows and Unix. Marketing pushes by IBM, Intel and Oracle (and to a lesser degree by Dell, HP and Red Hat) will contribute to this acceptance. The increasing horsepower of Intel and AMD processors will also help Linux adoption.

"At the end of 2005, more than 5 percent of corporate desktops will be running the Linux-FireFox tandem, with some running OpenOffice. X86-based servers running Windows and Linux will continue to take market share away from Unix servers. The percentage share of server cost on IT projects will continue to decline, with software, services, network, security, support and training taking on increasing shares. Companies will start trying out technologies such as VMW."

The executives said that developers will gain first-hand experience on the migration effort to Microsoft's ".Net" platform. After such an experience, some will opt to stay with their old tool or look for an alternative. The 4GL developer community will stay loyal to the concept, and look at "C" and Java with skepticism.

"Though the use of network attached storage and storage attached networks are on the rise, the local enterprise storage market will still experience moderate growth in 2005," they said. "(The Philippines) is not yet poised for the explosive growth in storage that happened in more developed countries. The local industry does not have the same strict regulatory requirements on data retention and business continuity. Use of data warehousing and business intelligence is also limited. However, there will be significant interest in IP SAN (iSCSI) technology."

All in all, 2005 is expected to become an interesting year for IT, better than 2004, added Yu.

However, as Joaquin Quintos IV, president and general manager of IBM Philippines, stated: "We have consistently said that the next big thing in technology is not technology itself but a better way to make it work."

RP bows out to experienced players in online gaming tilt

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

THE PHILIPPINE team had determination, confidence and teamwork. In the end, though, experience spelled the difference.

The more experienced Japanese and Chinese teams stunned the Filipino team in the semi-finals of an online gaming tournament held in Seoul, South Korea. The Filipino team "Rebels" eventually was eliminated.

After almost half a day of competition, the South Korean players emerged as the 2004 winners of the MU Battle Soccer Tournament, defeating Japan in the finals. China took third place.

"They had something we didn't know," said Paul Co, coach of the "Rebels," a few minutes after the game against the Japanese ended.

While the "Rebels" qualified for the semi-finals of the MU Battle Soccer Tournament after defeating Taiwanese players in the first round, they eventually lost two games to the Japanese, as the latter unleashed tactics and attacks unknown to the less-experienced Filipino players.

It was also the same story with the Chinese team. The dominating team from China defeated the "Rebels" as they unraveled the same tactics used by the Japanese against the Filipino players.

The Philippine team was eliminated from the tournament after reaching the semi-finals.

The MU Battle Tournament involves a virtual "battle soccer" competition between two teams. Each team has to hit a virtual ball using their swords, magic or any other weapon. Teams are composed of high-level MU playable characters like magic gladiators, blade knights, soul masters and muse elves.

The goal of Battle Soccer is for each team to complete the first 100 points per match. Each soccer goal is worth 20 points, but players are allowed to kill their challengers. Each kill is worth one point.

MU Online, an online game developed in South Korea, is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game.

Filipino team player Alfred Mendoza, the eldest among the group, acknowledged that their rivals had more skill and experience.

"We lost to them because they're more experienced," he told this writer.

For his part, Jarvis Ng of the Filipino team vowed to come back next year.

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DEPARTURES 2004

Bibot's lessons on theater and life

By Pablo A. Tariman

AS I sat beside filmmaker Marilou Diaz-Abaya at the wake last month of Zeneida "Bibot" Amador, Imelda Marcos asked me if the late director-actress received national recognition worthy of her stature.

I replied, "Madame, Bibot will never be national artist because, as her detractors say, she promoted nothing but Western culture which to some people was simply 'escapist.' In the same manner, Cecile Licad will never be national artist because she plays nothing but Chopin and Beethoven (and Buencamino in between)."

"Oh," said the former First Lady. "How parochial!"

Looking at the urn containing the ashes of Amador and reflecting on the 37 years I have been watching Repertory plays, I realized that I owe my theater education mainly to two persons who are now both dead: Rolando Tinio and Amador.

> 'Education is not instruction but discovery'

By accident, I saw the Pilipino versions of Teatro Pilipino under Tinio of the first few productions of Repertory Philippines in its 1967-68 season (Miss Julie, Antigone, The Importance of Being Earnest). Both productions moved me.

I guess the golden age of my theater-going days were those spent at Teatro Pilipino and Repertory Philippines, and PETA in between.

Acceptance

After close to four decades of acting and directing and nurturing a theater company, Amador learned to accept both the applause and the brickbats.

In her own words, "It is as much my right to perform as it is their right to criticize."

Some 12 years ago, she and I laughed our heads off discussing an incident in Congress when legislators, in full view of television viewers, grappled for the symbol of power, the Mace.

Amador said, "What they did chasing that mace in full view of a horrified public was grossly inelegant and don't tell me there is no place for elegance in our lives. In these unpredictable times, we need a better mirror on which we can view life, not at its sordid worst, but at its elegant best."

BIBOT'S/ C3

ZENEIDA "Bibot" Amador: singular force in RP theater

The artist who soared

By Yasmin Doctor
Contributor

> A former pilot, Lino Severino painted ancestral houses with the passion of his Silay childhood

AFTER many years of enchanting us with his old Hispanic houses, the artist bids us farewell.

Lino Severino Jr. passed away on Dec. 7 after a battle with brain cancer. The 72-year-old artist, who became known for his depiction of ancestral homes, seemed to have had a premonition of his departure: just a week earlier, he had a reunion with two of his close friends, artists Romulo Olazo and Edgar Doctor.

Severino, who used to be a pilot before he pursued a career in the arts, has flown to heaven.

His dreams of flying planes and handling a paintbrush started in his childhood during the '40s. As a child growing up in Silay, he became fascinated with flying and devoted much of

THE ARTIST/ C3

LINO Severino, artist of nostalgia

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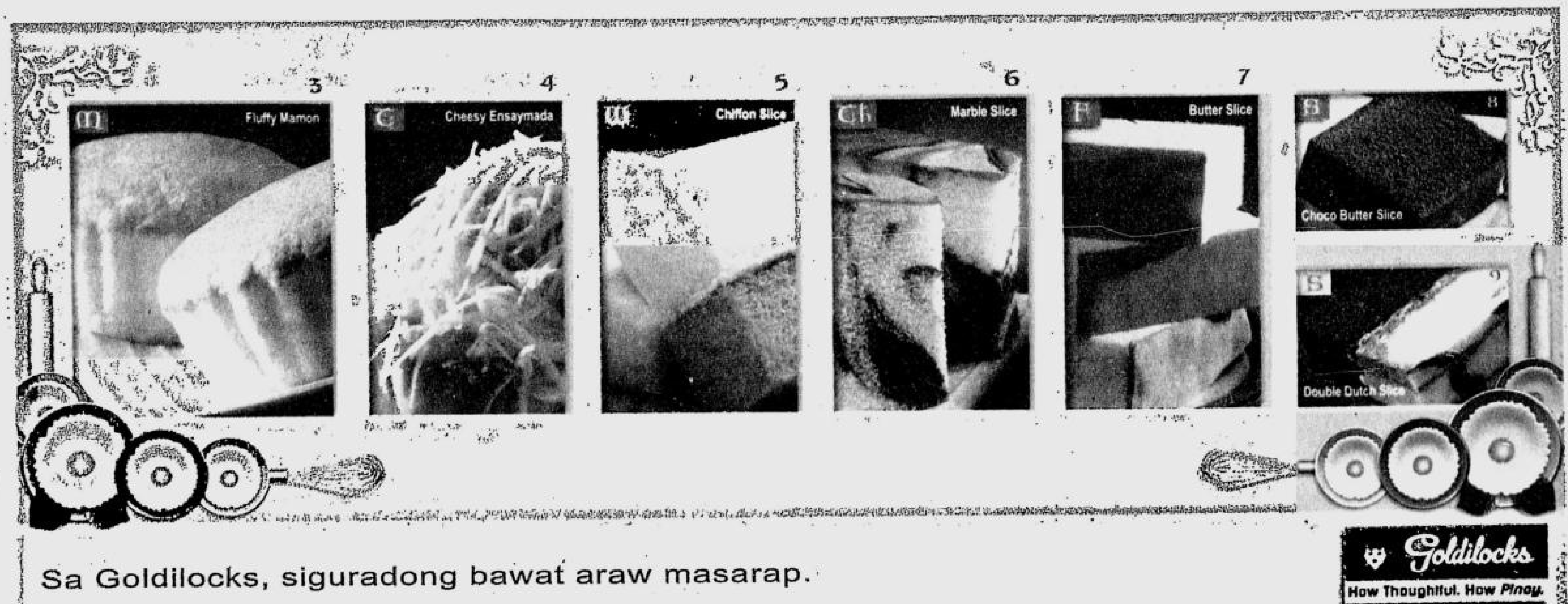
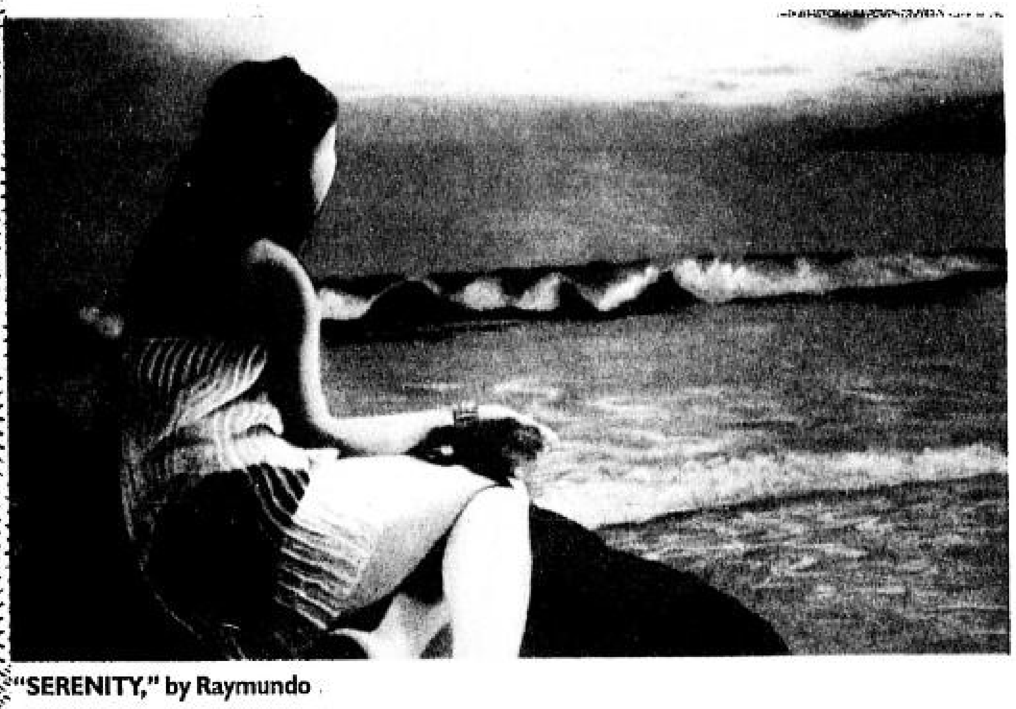
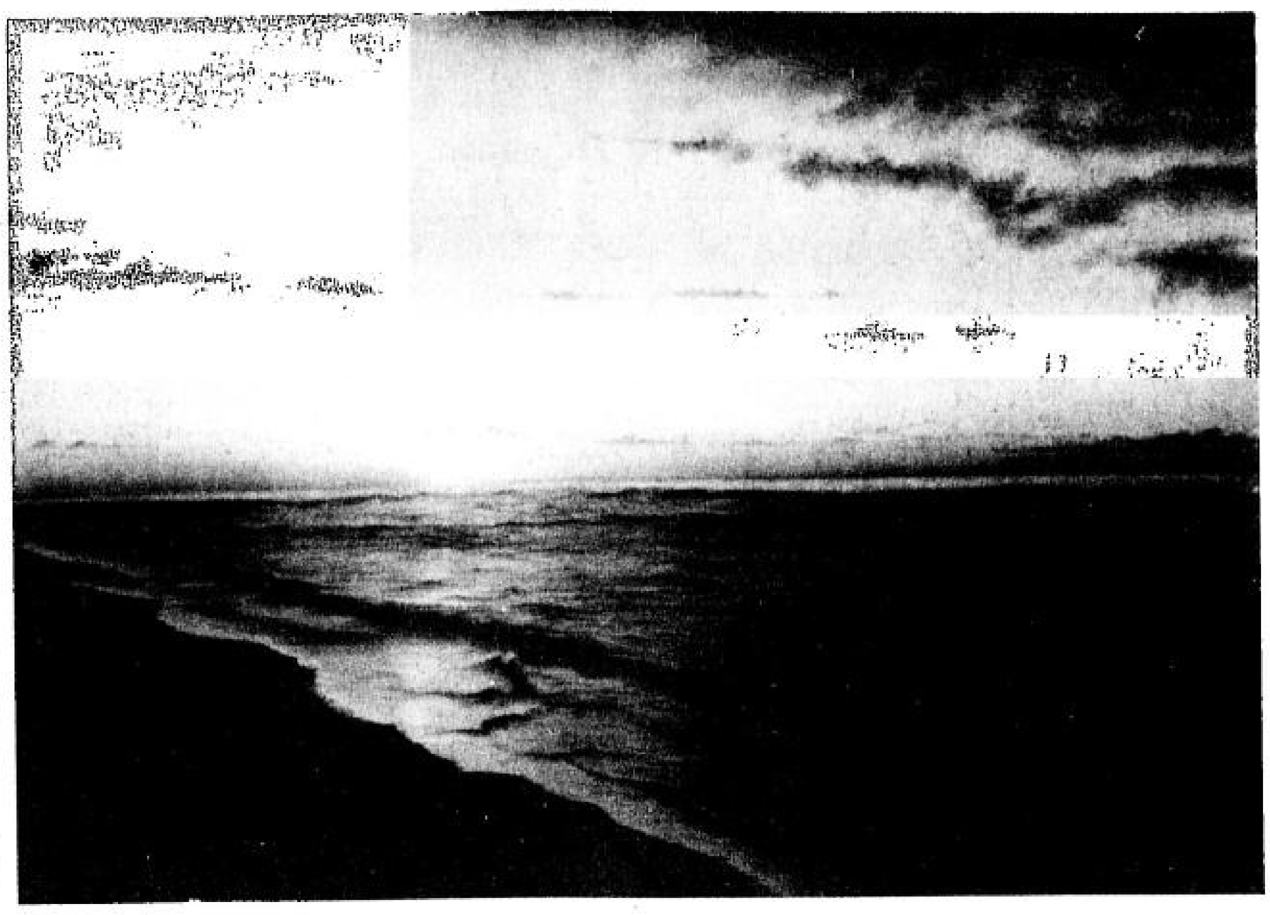
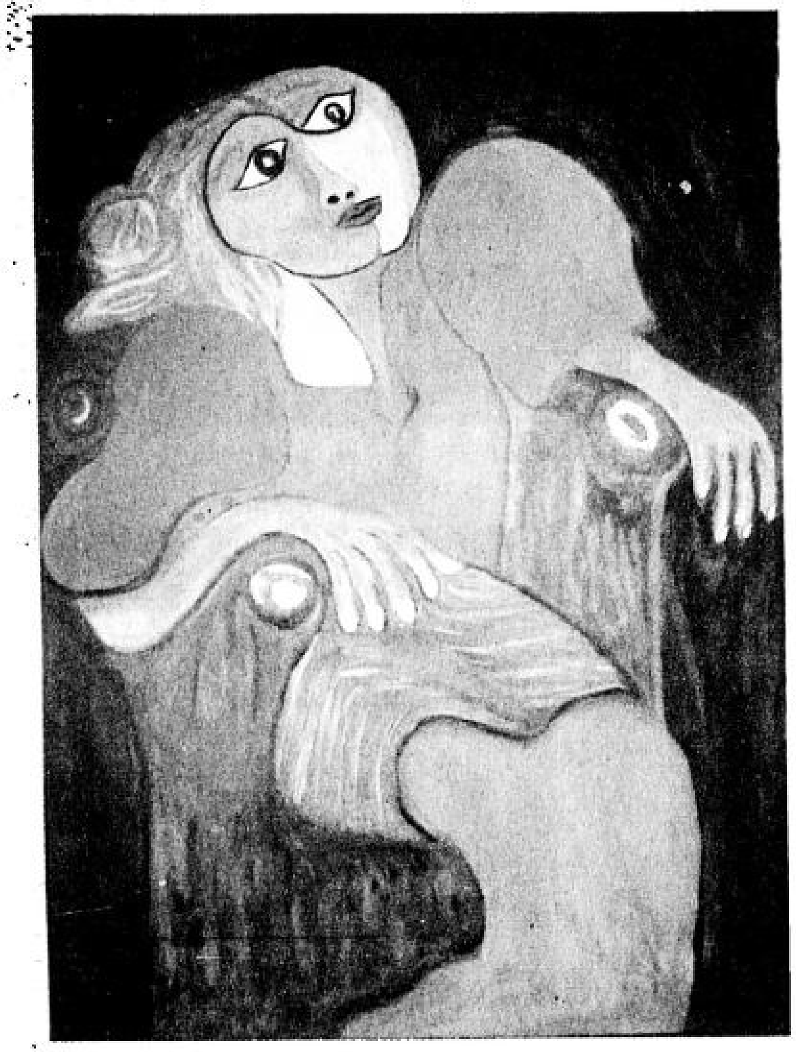


Sa Goldilocks, siguradong bawat araw masarap.
Goldilocks
How Thoughtful. How Pinoy.


"SERENITY," by Raymundo


"SUNSET," by Jill Raymundo


GALLERY 139 showcases "Remembering Inday" on Jan. 7-26 at 3/L, Glorietta 4, Ayala Center, Makati. Works on display are the late Elsie "Inday" Cadapan's early and rare oil paintings on canvas, figurative pastel on paper, ceramic tiles and painted sculpture. Call 7289724.

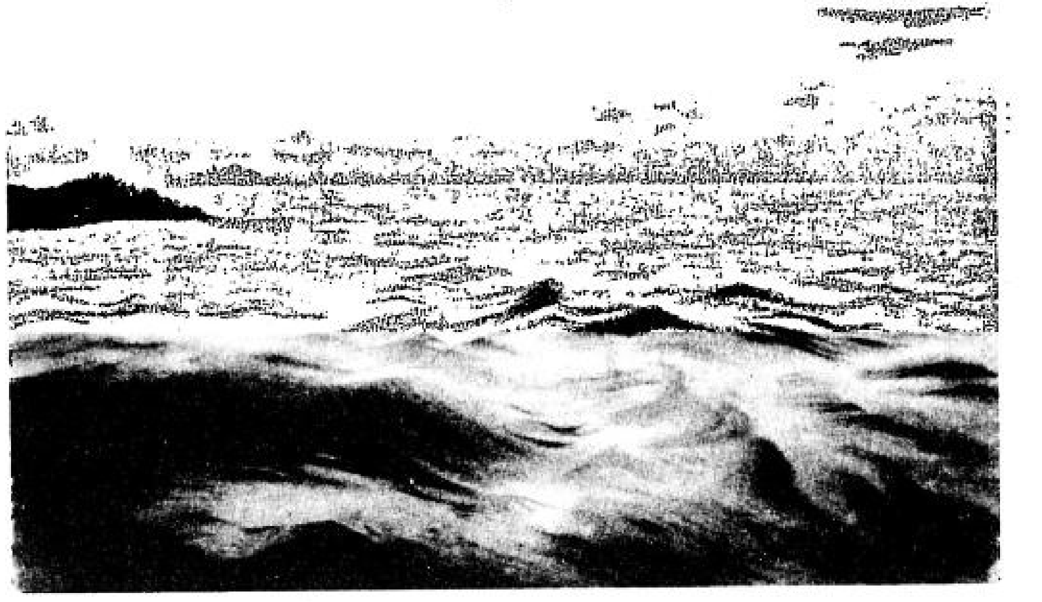
Jill Raymundo at Le Soufflé

VISUAL ARTS

LE SOUFFLE presents Jill Raymundo's "New Works" until Jan. 15 at 2/L, Wynsum Corporate Plaza, Ruby Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig. The artist's drawing reflects her distinctive approach to poetic narratives. Through her use of seascape horizons, she provokes an atmosphere that is at once subdued and romantic. Raymundo, born in 1982, lives between Manila and Vancouver. She completed her Bachelor's in Fine Arts at the Columbus College of Art and Design and Parson's School of Design in New York. Her work has been seen in the Canzani Center, Rhodes Tower and Beaton Gallery in Columbus, Ohio; Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC; and Corning Gallery, Parsons Gallery and Scholastics Building in New York. Raymundo won the National Pentad Scholastics Award in 1998 and 3 Best of Shows in 2000, and a scholarship at the Columbus College. Call 6361614 or 6361613.

HIRAYA Gallery (530 UN Avenue, Ermita, Manila) features "Epistles on Death, Decay and Nostalgia" until Jan. 15. The exhibition presents timely portrayals of the contemporary issues in the Philippines. Participating artists are Ronald Ventura, Benjamin Elayda, Bonnie Gimenez, Imelda Cajipe Endaya, Nunelucio Alvarado, Pablo Baens Santos and Eduardo Paredes. Call 5233331.

GALERIA de las Islas in Intramuros is exhibiting "Artists Forever" until Jan. 5. The show by the Painters Club tries to convey an intimate understanding of nature. The group consists of Jes Garcia, Domeng Labordo, Ronald Cortez, Roland Santos, Nik Masangcay Jr. and Lito Milan. Call 5272113.


"SEASCAPE," by Raymundo

MICHEL Herbert mounts his second solo exhibit "Les Suspendus" on Jan. 13-Feb. 5 at Ricco Renzo Galleries. The artist reveals the influence of the tropics in his choice of colors. Ricco Renzo Galleries is at the G/L, LRI Plaza, 210 N. Garcia St., Bel-Air II, Makati. Call 8982542/43/45.

'THE UNVEILING," a two-man exhibition of Harry Mark Gonzales and Lucell Larawan can be viewed on Jan. 7-Feb. 7 at Phinma Gallery, Negros Museum, Bacolod City. Gonzales specializes in terra-cotta sculptures. Larawan prefers paintings but finds new excitement in his sculpture explorations.

THE DRAWING Room presents Mia Herbosa's works on Jan. 15-Feb. 7 at the G/F, Metrostar Building, 1007 Metropolitan Avenue, Makati. Herbosa will exhibit new portrait drawings, all graphite on paper, watercolors, oil and select etchings. Call 8977877 or 8976990.

Season's surprises from two women

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

TWO NEW shows in the older and more established galleries, and involving veteran women artists, dispel the notion that December, usually the season of group shows to sell works that have languished in the stockrooms, is not be taken seriously in the art calendar.

The new works of Francesca Enriquez at the Finale Art Gallery (until Jan. 8) are a sight to behold, both in terms of the artist's obsessive pursuit of her subject—the character of interiors—and her mastery of the brush.

The show may have only eight works on view, but the number suffices to make the viewer drool with ecstatic pleasure at the artist's masterful compositions of fully furnished interiors, from floor to ceiling, and the slew of accessories lying on top of tables and chairs, as well as those inside cabinets, cupboards and even those mounted on walls.

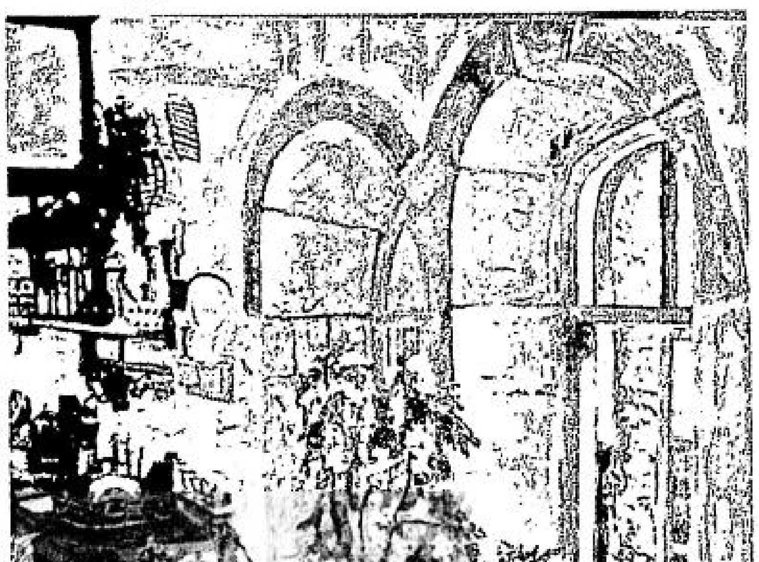
Each painting focuses on a salient aspect—shall we say personality?—of the setting. The artist has an uncanny way with grouping and arranging objects, which reveals her unique gift in conjuring space.

Every painting has an amazing revelation to make, be it the color and design of the carpet that pulls everything together, or the quality of light filtering through windows and curtains, or the color scheme of the interiors.

The virtuoso application of impasto deserves a closer look.

Enriquez has assiduously explored every facet of the home, ever mindful of what the setting has to offer by way of color, composition and chiaroscuro, not to mention the unseen character of those who inhabit these places.

While other artists could have exhausted all possibilities at such a brush-boggling task, Enriquez has always something new and exciting to explore, proof that her love affair with interiors is the one consuming passion of her art.


"MORNING Light" by Francesca Enriquez

"MARANAO Women" by Julie Lluch

Women in repose

Also at the SM Megamall Art Walk, at the Galleria Duemila, is the solo exhibit of Julie Lluch (until Jan. 12), consisting of sculptures in terra cotta, a medium best identified with the artist who is now based in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte.

The nine pieces—six life-size and three busts—depict Maranao women in various stages of repose: sitting, squatting, sleeping. Their faces, though partly shrouded by veil, reveal the strength of character evident in the solid forms and bodily expression.

The women are in a relaxed if meditative state, as suggested by their downcast gaze and supple arms that are made to lean on the bodies. The titles are in Cebuano, though the Maranao translation could have served a better purpose.

The terra cotta lends itself to expressiveness. The face is limned to reveal the state of mind of the subject. The figures are devoid of any political commentary: These women are at peace with themselves, unmindful of the violence around them.

For a sculptor long known for her disturbing images, from women to beasts and plant life, the new show is surprising and most bewildering. But Lluch has a legendary ability to reinvent herself at various periods of her artistic life. And since her artistic struggles are at the core of her works, we assume that the artist is making a plea for peace and solidarity. What more inspiring message can we deduce from these figures literally molded from the earth?

E-mail the author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com

Top printmakers at UST Beato Angelico Gallery

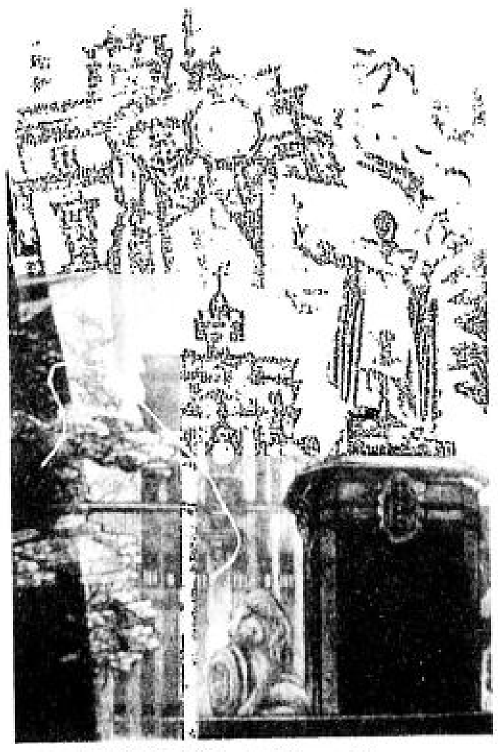
THE PHILIPPINE Association of Printmakers (PAP) will mount the "Bakat ng Limbag Sining II" exhibit at the Beato Gallery of the University of Santo Tomas College of Fine Arts and Design on Jan. 6, with a formal opening at 6 p.m.

The PAP commemorative show, which has traveled around the country, consists of fine prints collected by the group over the last 30 years. It boasts of rare specimens in various printmaking techniques by such graphic arts stalwarts as National Artist Jerry Elizalde Navarro, Ojeng Jocano, Santiago Bose, Ibarra de la Rosa and Mars Galang, who have all passed away.

Also included are works by National Artist Arturo Luz, Bencab, Mario Parial, Romulo Olazo, Tiny Nuyda, Rodolfo Samonte and Ofelia Gelvezon-Tequi.

Also represented are the prints of PAP presidents and officers Raul Isidro, Fil Delacruz and Virgilio Aviado, who helped advance printmaking in the country with their traveling workshops, which won the Gawad Dangal ng Haraya from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

"Bakat II" is PAP's tribute to the pioneers of printmaking in the country—Manuel Rodriguez Sr. and Adiel Arevalo. Rodriguez Sr., acknowledged as the "Father of Filipino Printmaking," set up the Contemporary Graphic Arts Workshop in San Andrea in 1961. Arevalo, one of the founders of PAP, put up Print Collections Gallery in Malate.


"UNIVERSITY of Santo Tomas," by Fil Delacruz

The exhibit also shows the recent works of younger printmakers who have won in the PAP's Open Fine Print Competition in the last two years. These include prints by Cornelio Roman Santos, Jan Leeroy New, Mark Ramsel Salvatus, Evelyn Collantes, Bernard Temporosa, Jess Flores, Jason Renidel, Tita Rosel, Ronald Raga and this year's winners led by grand prize winner Janos Delacruz.

To open the exhibit are UST Fine Arts and Design dean Jaime de los Santos and associate dean Rhoda Recto.

Call 8906984.

DEPARTURES 2004

Poorer by two

By Constantino C. Tejero

THIS week is the death anniversary of two of our literary fathers.

Had he not written anything else, Andres Cristobal Cruz's name in Philippine literature would still be secure just on the strength of three slim volumes: "Estero Poems," "Tondo by Two" and "Ang Tundo Man May Langit Din."

But the man has a prodigious literary output. Writing in both English and Filipino, he produced innumerable poems, short stories, novels, essays, articles and columns, translations and adaptations, speeches for government officials, tidbits and vignettes on culture and history.

His first Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Award, first prize for the short story "The Quarrel," he won in 1953 when he was only 24 years old. Since the award is considered a watershed for Filipino writers with literary ambitions, as early as that Cruz must have been considered already made.

Published in the early 1960s, his three significant works—the first a booklet of poems, the second a short-story collection co-authored with Pacifico Aprieto, the third a novel serialized in Liwayway—he wrote when he was still in his early 30s. So, writing through the following decades until his death (he was reportedly preparing translations of Irish poetry), he must just be coasting along.

When the obituary appeared in the papers, a new generation of readers who knew him only as a journalist and columnist was a bit surprised to learn that the man actually wrote those literary landmarks.

A graduate of University of the Philippines, with a degree of Bachelor of Arts major in English, Cruz was the literary editor of the Philippine Collegian. Together with the likes of Virginia Moreno and Alejandro Hufana, he formed the writers group Ravens. In recent years, he acted as the literary agent of Nick Joaquin.

Romantic realist

Born in Dagupan, Pangasinan, Cruz grew up in the slums of Tondo, going to school in Gagalangin—a milieu that became a constant in his stories and poems. This was the ground that nourished the roots of the social awareness in his writings.

Some critics say he has romanticized Tondo, portraying life in it as some kind of an idyll. In a few cases it could be true, as nostalgia often colors the truth—but not always.

Consider these lines from the oft-anthologized "Night on the Estero," and see if they're not gritty enough for the taste of hardcore social realists:

And from the bottom of the ditch bubbles fetid air
That wrenches off a horned lizard's mockery
As a woman's laughter in the farthest alley
Dies in the deep crannies of estero-sides.

If anything, it is a social awareness that imbues everything Cruz wrote, even the personal poems such as the songlike "Sea Scene" and the sensual yet religious "Revelation."

What may be romantic is his use of language, as he could turn lines of such preciosity any self-respecting social realist would understandably despise: "She bathed for her lover with the ravaged face."

But that's now water in the *estero*. The man is already in a real idyll far above this make-believe place.

In December 2003, Cruz was taken to the Philippine Heart Center for treatment of a chronic heart problem. There he developed acute pulmonary embolism, and died of internal organ failure on Jan. 5, 2004. He was 74.

Another passing

A week earlier, another literary father, E. Arsenio Manuel, also passed away, two weeks after he celebrated his 94th birthday.

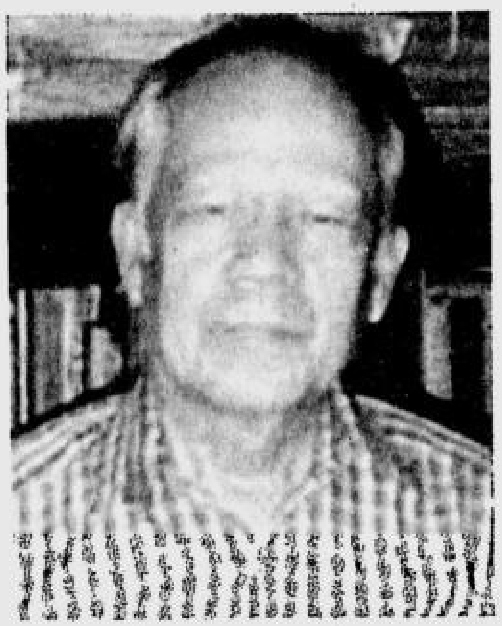
Manuel pioneered in recording the oral literature of Central Mindanao. He transcribed and translated the narratives and riddles of the Upland Bagobo, the ethno-epics of the Manuvu ("The Maiden of the Buhong Sky"), the Matigsalug ("Tuwaang Attends a Wedding"), and the Ilianon ("Agyu").

His interest extends to an inventory of Philippine musical instruments; a study of the Manuvu social organization; essays on the epic, the *balagtasan*, the *pasyon*, *awit* fragments; biographies, dictionaries, books of linguistics.

Manuel is considered the Dean of Philippine Anthropology and the Father of Philippine Folklore.

With his and Andres Cristobal Cruz's passing, Philippine literature has become poorer by two.

ANDRES
Cristobal Cruz



E. ARSENIO
Manuel

Bibot's lessons on theater and life

From page C1

She then invited me to watch the musical "Gigi" and learn about elegance.

Amador admitted she did better in comedy than, in say "Mother Courage and Her Children", though she was memorable in her role there. "I like comic parts because it requires terrific pacing, rhythm and good timing. Or perhaps, I must be a comedian at heart."

Good comedy was what I got the last time I saw her in "Late Night Catechism" with Abaya and Laurice Guillen. After we hugged her, Amador told Guillen, "Why don't you do 'Late Nite Catechism' in Pilipino?"

Moving film

Guillen never got to do Amador's suggestion but she directed the moving film about the Catholic faith, "Santa Santita" which had echoes of "Late Nite Catechism."

Amador thought directing was the lousiest job in theater because one couldn't even audition for it. Said she: "An actor can get a job in theater by passing an audition and a director can't..."

Having been a director for more than 30 years, she dissected the job. First, one must know the play very well and read the statement the author is trying to make. The director must be true to the spirit of that perceived statement.

This involves a thousand and one details the director has to take care of. "Upon learning the play, it is your (director's) job to cast it as best you can by asking: who can do this better? Who can do justice to this part. You have to communicate to both the cast and production staff your vision for the play and rehearse it accordingly."

Another important task for the director is providing the framework for the mounting of the production. "You have to do this so you don't shortchange your artists. Give them leeway to create. You must have a clear overview of the production and still get to mind the details. A choreographer in a musical cannot do her thing out of context. There is a lot to watch out for in this job because in reality directing really involves orchestrating a million different things."

I asked Amador, "What makes a good director?"

Lifelong education

"I think good taste is another must and a certain degree of literacy," she said. "I always tell my actors to read because in this job, they can't afford to be illiterate. I read every single night even if I am very tired. You have to keep adding to what you already know."

Amador watched concerts at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and once saw tenor Otoniel Gonzaga singing with a music stand beside him. She later said, "Nobody goes onstage in Repertory unless he/she has memorized the songs."

Here are other quotable quotes from Amador:

On discipline: "I don't think you can achieve excellence in the arts without discipline. I am basically a teacher of actors and that is one area where I think I have done a lot... I think education is not instruction but discovery. I impose uncompromising discipline and... is what they call my 'dictatorship'."

On success in theater: "In art there is no corruption because... you cannot cut corners and expect... success. There are no miracles in theater because nothing comes easy."

On what counts in life: "...I used to tell my students, 'Don't ever set out to do what you don't want to do. When you love doing something and it's not lucrative enough, just say: 'To hell with money' because I don't think it should count. What is important is that your life resonates'."

A Madrigal Christmas feast

By Antonio C. Hila

PHILIPPINE
Madrigal Singers

THE GRAND ballroom of the Dusit Hotel Nikko was transformed into a Renaissance court with the recent Madrigal Christmas feast.

The event combined singing and dining. The Philippine Madrigal Singers, ably led by choirmaster Mark Anthony Carpio, made fine dining doubly delightful.

It has been more than three decades now since the Madz staged this kind of Yuletide celebration at the University of the Philippines College of Music.

Guests waiting outside Dusit's ballroom were led inside after a fanfare by two trumpeters, Mark Anthony Mamagat and Glover Calambro. The ballroom looked like a grand castle complete with banners. The stage was set as a U-shaped banquet table that faced the guests.

Medieval program

Once seated, the singers made their impressive entrance. Clad in medieval regalia, they sang as they walked to the banquet table Thomas Morley's "Lirum-Lirum" in well-blended voices.

National Artist Andrea O. Veneracion, the Indiana University alumna who is Madz's founding choirmaster, welcomed the guests and opened the festivity.

After the "Wassail Song", Lydia Echaus, president of the Far Eastern University, offered a toast. Next came the fanfare for the boar's head, with Philip Belarmino and Terence Guillermo entering with a replica to the tune of the "Boar's Head" carol. It signaled the start of the dinner.

Fanfare was again sounded for desert. The "pudding" was brought in to the merry tune of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

Simple but filling

The choir joined the guests in the simple yet filling dinner.

The fanfare itself was interesting to hear as it was culled from Rossini's "William Tell Overture" and Lucio D. San Pedro's "Simbang Gabi." Terence Guillermo, who acted as page, announced the sequence of the program.

The guests reveled in the singing. The program was light, consisting of madrigals and European carols, including the Philippines' most celebrated Christmas song from the south, the Cebuano's *daygon*, "Kasadya ning Takna-a (Ang Pasko ay Sumapit)."

Every number was well-applauded, especially "Stille Nacht" as arranged by Brnd Englbrecht in a contemporary idiom that had not lost its appeal. So was John Rutter's arrangement of "Deck the Hall," which was infused with sparkling conviviality. Leo M. Tellep's 'Jingle Bells Calypso" stole the show, with some of the guests humming along.

The guests had a grand time singing with the Madz the carols "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "O Holy Night" "Angels We Have Heard on High," and 'Joy to the World."

Kudos to Emerging Education Executives, Indiana University Alumni Association of the Philippines and the Taft Consulting Group that sponsored the concert.

The artist . . .

From page C1

his time painting accurate copies of flying machines.

After graduating from high school, the young Severino entered the Philippine Air Force. Soon, he was flying his very own fighter jet.

Years later, the ex-Air Force pilot would fly domestic and international flights for Philippine Airlines (PAL). He even became a private pilot for the Philippine National Bank afterwards.

But he joined his love of flying with art. While still in PAL, he took classes in painting.

In 1975, Severino joined the annual art competition of the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP). He became a finalist.

During the mid '70s, Severino, together with Olazo and Doctor, would go to Binangonan every Thursday and spend the rest of the day there painting on the spot with National Artist Vicente Manansala.

In 1986, Severino joined the AAP competition again and was honorable mention. He was a member of the AAP, Saturday Group and other artist groups.

His artworks were exhibited abroad in Chile, People's Republic of China, the United States and France.

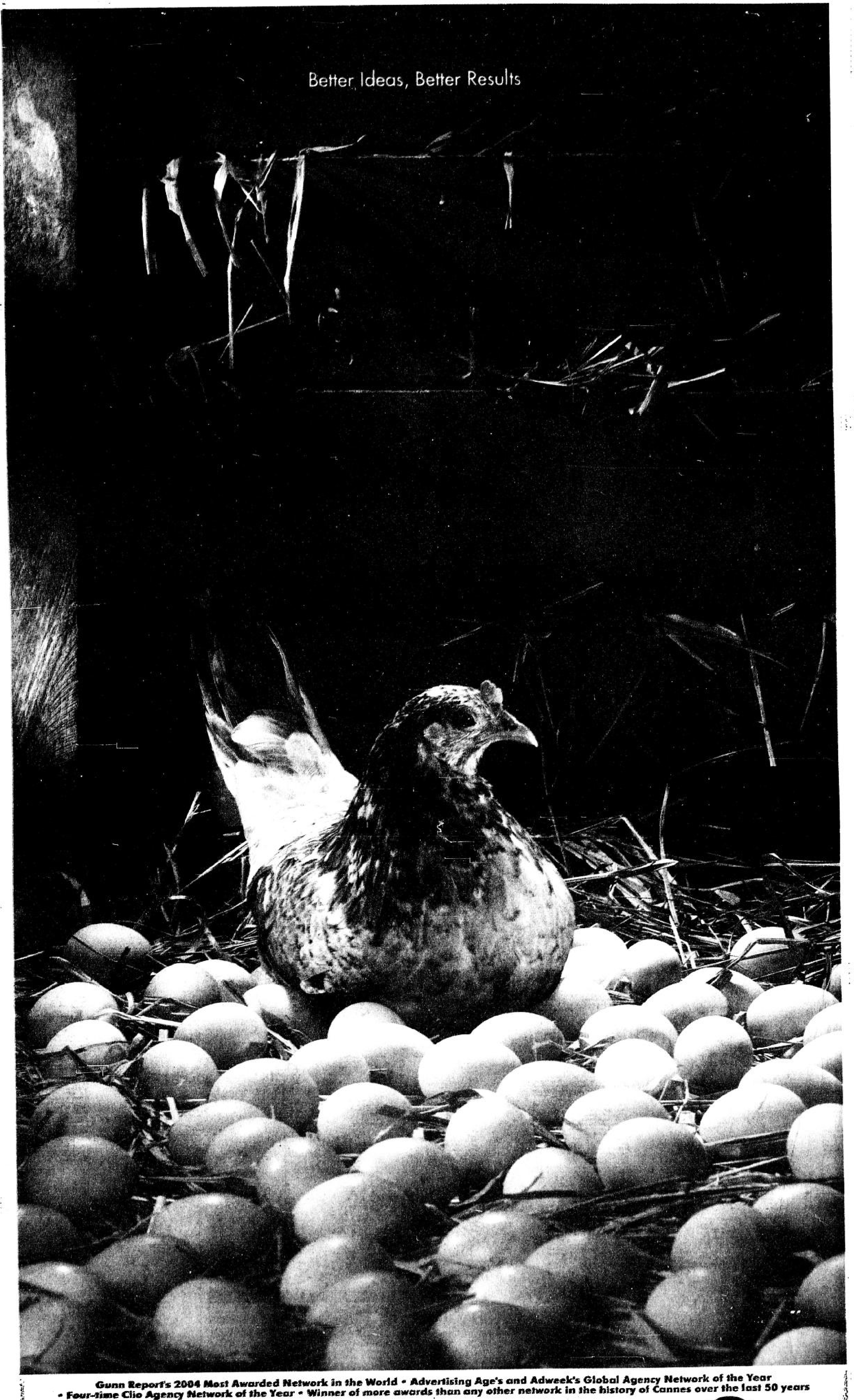
Severino's passion was to let people feel the stories of the past through his canvass. His artworks speak of a language no longer understood in this fast-paced world. Yet, he was able to capture a moment from another time like a photographer.

Adding poetry to his pictures, Severino was able to make his art bleed with longing and solitude, but keeping restraint. His neatly lined planks of wood and intricate grillwork next to broken capiz windows complemented his sullen colors.

His art was filled with nostalgia. And just like any pilot, Severino was able to transport this bygone-era to our time and succeeded.

He was not only a painter and a pilot, but a historian.

And even if he is gone, Severino will always be remembered as the man who brought life to the past. His art will touch the hearts of younger generations and his memory will never fade.



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'My man will come; I just don't know when'

JUDY ANN SANTOS faces yet another year of . . . work.

By Remy Umerez
Contributor

ONSCREEN, Judy Ann Santos, 26, has passionately whispered (or exclaimed, depending on the director's mood) the words "mahal kita," or "I love you" to the likes of Wendell Ramos, Piolo Pascual and Robin Padilla.

These are only three of the men romantically linked with her in the past until the public got the joke: Each time, it was just a ploy to generate interest for some movie that she was making.

However, insiders insist that Robin was really smitten with Juday, prompting his wife Liezl to warn that she was leaving him.

Robin didn't think she was kidding. He immediately flew to Australia, where Liezl and their children live, to court her all over again. Juday has vigorously denied there was any truth to the rumor: "I never dreamed of falling in love with a married man and being branded a home wrecker."

In the historic epic "Aishite Imasu (Mahal Kita) 1941," official entry in the 2004 Metro Manila Film Festival, the words of love are uttered by Judy Ann and Raymart Santiago.

Judy Ann plays Inya, a woman who believes in fighting for her loved ones and her country. Her character undergoes a radical transformation when a fortuitous event compels her to lead the revolutionary movement.

"The role is something different and demanding," the actress says. "It is like being transported to an era that my parents experienced."

An ad for love?

Judy Ann and Raymart were both very professional in executing their love scenes, which are not sparse, in the movie. Doesn't she wish there were someone whispering "aishite imasu" to her in real life and adding meaning to her Christmas? Or is she content being "married" to her career?

"I've been often asked that question," she says, "and my answer has remained the same. One doesn't look for love. It is not something you launch a search for, or have custom-made. You are destined to either marry or grow old alone.

"Of course, I want to have a husband and children someday. But what can I do if that's not my destiny? I couldn't very well place an ad for a man. He will come; I just don't know when."

Maybe men are intimidated by her success?

"I hope not," Juday says again, laughing. "Maybe they just don't know how to get in touch with me. But you know, if you are really interested in someone, you will find a way. Filipino men, especially, are known for being resourceful. They are not easily intimidated. I'm not hard to track down, in the first place. It's usually just work and home for me. I tape three times a week. I'm not a party person."

Easy to please

Neither does she set such high standards, she adds. "I am quite easy to please. A bouquet of roses or a box of chocolates can send me sighing. But one quality that I require in a man is that he must be hard-working like me. Plus, I don't like womanizers."

Without a man in her life, Judy Ann faces yet another year of ... work. Her "Krystala" on ABS-CBN flies for only one season character, but she is next looking at "something light, maybe a sitcom." Drama involves "too much crying," she points out, and can get very stressful. "I want to make audiences laugh, for a change."

Two movies are lined up with Aga Muhlach as leading man. But she hopes she can spend at least one month of 2005 on vacation abroad—anywhere she can walk around like any "normal" tourist. Who knows, indeed? Love may find her on foreign soil.

Dressing up the Clooney gang

MONEYED LOOK. "The characters have more money now, so [Soderbergh] wanted to make sure they didn't look the same as they did three years earlier."

COSTUME DESIGNER Milena Canonero, a two-time Academy Award winner for her work on "Chariots of Fire" and "Barry Lyndon," was given the enviable task of outfitting the stellar cast of Warner Bros.' new crime comedy, "Ocean's Twelve," highly awaited sequel to "Ocean's Eleven."

Canonero joined the production team at the behest of director Steven Soderbergh and producer Jerry Weintraub.

"I did not costume 'Ocean's Eleven,'" Canonero says, "and when Steven first called me I was nervous about dealing with so many famous actors all at once. Also, I had just finished working on Wes Anderson's 'The Life Aquatic' and wasn't sure I was ready to take 'Ocean's Twelve.' But Jerry Weintraub is such a force of nature that you cannot say no to him. And the idea of working again for Steven was very exciting. I love working for him."

"The truth is," the designer admits, "it was fun to have so many different characters to design for. Many people think you only design and build costumes when it is a period movie. But when I do a 'modern' movie, I actually do construct some costumes. But I like to mix what I make with clothes selected from various designers which are suitable for the look of the characters.

"We made most of Catherine Zeta-Jones' wardrobe and several outfits for Elliott Gould, Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Andy Garcia, Julia Roberts, Vincent Cassel and most of the other characters."

Soderbergh asked Canonero to bring a fresh style to the characters' clothing, rather than simply repeating the style created by "Ocean's Eleven" costume designer Jeffrey Kurland.

"The characters have more money now, and they have evolved and matured, so Steven wanted to make sure they didn't look the same as they did three years earlier when we first met them," explains Canonero, who previously designed the costumes for Soderbergh's films "Solaris" and "Eros."

"However," she says, "I did have discussions with the cast and some of them have retained certain particulars from the first film."

For ringleader George Clooney, Canonero maintained the "very minimalist and simple, yet stylish" look.

"George's wardrobe is monochromatic: blacks, greys, browns and a little beige," she says. "Brad Pitt is more vain and more into his clothes. I used lots of satins and shiny material to give a shimmer and slickness to his look, just like lightning."

Canonero helped Julia Roberts take her character, Tess Ocean, in a new direction.

"Julia likes to bring a lot of ideas to her fittings, and she wanted to play Tess a little bit freer in this film and not quite as arch as she had been in the first," says the designer, who had to go back to the drawing board several weeks into production when Roberts discovered she was pregnant with twins.

In the original shooting script, Tess was five months pregnant, and her whole wardrobe was designed accordingly. When Roberts became pregnant in real life, Soderbergh decided that Tess would not be with child in the film.

Hero look

For ambitious Europol agent Isabel Lahiri, played by Catherine Zeta-Jones, the designer strived to achieve a stylish yet highly professional wardrobe.

"I went with what I call the 'hero look' and repeated elements of her wardrobe, like trench coats, which I felt gave her a 'detective' air," Canonero says.

"Catherine liked that we repeated the coat in different colors. It was a happy coincidence that just after I had them made, trench coats became a hot fashion item. For scenes that depict Isabel in flashback, her clothing establishes that she is much more free and relaxed than in the present."

Similarly, Canonero designed the wardrobe for master thief Francois Toulour that reflects the character's duality.

"Tolour comes from an aristocratic, international European background," she says of the character played by Vincent Cassel. "He's charming and there is a lightness in the way that he laughs. But there is a darkness to his character as well, because his life is spent stealing, which is mainly done at night. So his clothes are black and white."

(Opening on Jan. 6 across the Philippines, "Ocean's Twelve" is distributed by Warner Bros., a Warner Entertainment Co.)

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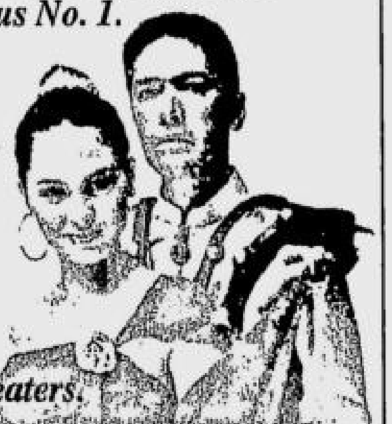

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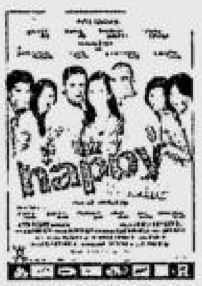
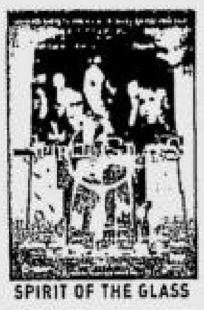

SO HAPPY TOGETHER

LATIKMAN

MANO PO

SIGAW


SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

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1 MANO PO 3
2 SIGAW
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 AISHITE IMASU 1941
7 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
8 MANO PO 3
9 LASTIKMAN
10 ENTENG KABISOTE
11 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
12 PANAGHOYSA SUBA

sm city fairview
1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MANO PO 3
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 ENTENG KABISOTE
9 AISHITE IMASU 1941
10 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
11 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
12 LASTIKMAN

sm city manila
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 MANO PO 3
3 AISHITE IMASU 1941
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 SIGAW
6 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
7 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
8 SIGAW
9 ENTENG KABISOTE
10 ENTENG KABISOTE
11 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
12 LASTIKMAN

sm city sta. mesa
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 MANO PO 3
3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 AISHITE IMASU 1941
7 LASTIKMAN
8 SIGAW
9 ENTENG KABISOTE
10 SIGAW

sm city southmall
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2 AISHITE IMASU 1941
3 LASTIKMAN
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 MANO PO 3
6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
9 SIGAW
10 MANO PO 3

sm city north edsa
1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
6 LASTIKMAN
7 AISHITE IMASU 1941
8 SIGAW

sm cinema tutuban
1 LASTIKMAN
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 MANO PO 3

sm supercenter sucat
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 LASTIKMAN

sm city bicutan
1 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 LASTIKMAN

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IT'S TIME TO PLAY THE OUIJA AND WIN AT SM CINEMA!

What is the name the spirit murmurs everytime they haunt them in the movie **SPIRIT OF THE GLASS**? The clues can be found below. Can you decipher the message? Watch **SPIRIT OF THE GLASS** to find out.

Subject to MTRCB Rating

Write SPIRIT OF THE GLASS, your answer, name, address, contact details and signature in a piece of paper and drop them at dropboxes located at all SM Cinema for a chance to win **1 of 20 Good Fortune Bracelet** from **Charms & Crystal by Joy Lim.**

OUIJA
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Music, laughter at Dish in January

SHOW TIME

WHATEVER your musical taste, Dish has a night especially tailored for you featuring Rivermaya and Karel Marquez, South Border, Side A, Freestyle, True Faith, Nina, Nyoy Volante, Akafellas and Artstrong.

Tuesdays spell variety. On Jan. 4, Dex de Rosa brings back his Michael Buble/Harry Connick Jr. act to Dish. On Jan. 11, the twin bill of Janna with Rhapsody and Tiny with Soul Cool provides music with laughs.

Jan. 18 brings Dianne de la Fuente with Elements. Jan. 25 is New Minstrels night, which guarantees quality entertainment.

All Wednesdays of January are retro nights featuring the Flinstones with their inimitable brand of yabba- dabba-doo fun. They bring the music of the '60s and '70s back to life.

Thursdays are red-letter days, with South Border and their brand of R&B on Jan. 6, Nyoy Volante and Manrios with their acoustic music on Jan. 13, and True Faith—with K24/7—on Jan. 27.

SOUTH BORDER

January's Fridays are hot! On Jan. 7, it's a MYX-ed bag of Rivermaya and Karel Marquez. Pop 'n' soul songstress Nina with the Essence band check in on Jan. 14.

And recent MTV Artist of the Month Artstrong takes over the last two Fridays with guests Ed Feist, Angel, Ayanna, Picasso and 7 Shots.

Saturdays won't let you down, either. On Jan. 8, it's the Akafellas and soul siren Rahda with Next Level. On Jan. 15, K24/7 joins Akafellas.

On Jan. 22, perennial favorite Side A and Barbie's Cradle raise the music and excitement level, while Barbie's Cradle checks in with Freestyle on Jan. 29.

Dish is at the ABS-CBN compound in Quezon City.

January a busy month at Merk's

MERK'S Bar Bistro starts the New Year with top-notch artists and performances.

January's Mondays feature Ladine Roxas in "Here I Am...Ladine." Tuesdays have Judith Banal, with the Powerplay band.

Wednesdays have the Wednesday Jazz Festival featuring Merk & Friends with Richard Merk, Sandra Lim and Eddie Katindig on Jan. 5, 12, 19 and 26.

The Jan. 19 show is "For Pete's Sake (A Tribute To Pete Roa)."

The Jan. 12 show spotlights Sweden's trombone-playing sisters Karin and Mimmi Hammar, also known as the Sliding Hammers.

Jam every Thursday with Acoustic Jive. The pop band Forte dazzles audiences every Friday. The family act Cruzin' takes over the stage on Saturdays, Jan. 15, 22 and 29.

On Jan. 8, Merk's presents "Stars on 45" plus an Elvis tribute.

Merk's Bar Bistro is on the third level of Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Makati City.

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2 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE GP
3 (DOLBY) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS PG13
4 (DOLBY) HAPPY TOGETHER PG13

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tel 733.4238
1. (DOLBY) BAD SIGAW
2. AISHITE IMASU 1941
3. HAPPY TOGETHER
4. SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5. ENTENG KABISOTE

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781
1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE
3 RESERVE
4 (SDDS) RESERVE
5 RESERVE
6 (DOLBY) RESERVE
7 (DTS) RESERVE
8 RESERVE
9 RESERVE

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(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 MANO PO - 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) MANO PO - 3
2 HAPPY TOGETHER
3 AISHITE IMASU 1941
4 (DTS) SIGAW

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DTS) MANO PO
2 (SDDS) ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 GOLD (DTS) PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 GOLD (DOLBY) AISHITE IMASU 1941
6 GOLD (SDDS) SIGAW
7 GOLD (DOLBY) LASTIKMAN
8 [illegible] LASTIKMAN
9 [illegible] HAPPY TOGETHER
10 [illegible] LASTIKMAN

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2 HAPPY TOGETHER
3 LASTIKMAN

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2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 LASTIKMAN
4 AISHITE IMASU 1941

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Pinas) tel (047) 237.7007
1 (DOLBY) SIGAW
2 AISHITE IMASU 1941

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
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2 (DOLBY) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE
4 (DOLBY) SIGAW

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta Center
ALI MALL CINEPLEX
Tel. 911-3101 loc. 8242 / 8281 / 8397
3 (Dolby) SIGAW
4 (SDDS) ENTENG KABISOTE
5 (DTS) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 (Dolby) MANO PO 3
7 (Dolby) PANAGHOY SA SUBA

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 LASTIKMAN
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) AISHITE IMASU 1941
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Alabang) tel 850.4285
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
4 HAPPY TOGETHER
5 (DOLBY) LASTIKMAN
6 SIGAW

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Great Image tagline launched

GREAT Image Photography recently held a successful launch of its new tagline, "Ilabas ang Totoo," at the Atrium of SM Megamall.

Endorsed by award-winning host Boy Abunda, Great Image continues to provide photographic services that capture real moments and events.

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The launch at the SM Megamall Atrium was attended by Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Mike Defensor, filmmaker Laurice Guillen, actress Dawn Zulueta, and members of the press.

It was hosted by Bianca Gonzalez and Drew Arellano. Erik Santos sang.

The Great Image launch was mounted by Backroom's Special Events Division and directed by Bong Quintana.

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GREAT/3

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From page 2

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SIGAW PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50	ENTENG KABISOTE GP 12:30,3:00,5:30,8:00	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50
SO HAPPY TOGETHER PG13	AISHITE IMASU 1941 PG13 1:20,3:35,5:50,8:05	MANO PO 3 GP 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40

MATINEE SCREENINGS BEFORE 5:00 P.M. - P80.00 - MON. - FRI.

star group of cinemas movie guide

IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

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Tel. No. 726.61.50
3 Lastikman
4 Sigaw
5 Panaghoy sa Suba

METROPOLIS ALABANG star
Tel. No. 850.42.85
1 Enteng Kabisote
2 Spirit of the Glass
3 Panaghoy sa Suba
4 Happy Together
5 Lastikman
6 Sigaw

starmall LAS PIÑAS
Tel. No. 873.50.04
1 Sigaw
2 Aishite Masu

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1 MANO PO 3
11:10, 1:30, 3:50, 6:10, 8:30, 10:50
GP

2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
12:25, 2:55, 5:20, 7:45, 10:20
PG-13

3 ENTENG KABISOTE
12:30, 3:10, 5:50, 8:30, 11:10
GP

4 HAPPY TOGETHER
12:05, 2:35, 5:05 7:35, 10:30
PG-13

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NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 1 MANO PO 3
10:30, 12:50, 3:10, 5:30, 7:50, 10:10
GP

CINEMA 2 ENTENG KABISOTE
GP

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SHANG CINEPLEX

① MANO PO 3
FS 12:20PM, 2:45PM, 5:10PM, 7:35PM, LMF 10PM (GP)

② ENTENG KABISOTE
FS 11:20PM, 2PM, 4:40PM, 7:20PM, LMF 10PM (GP)

③ SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
FS 11:40AM, 2PM, 4:20PM, 6:40PM, LMF 9PM (PG-13)

④ HAPPY TOGETHER
(PG-13)

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12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15

ENTENG KABISOTE
1:00 3:55 6:55 9:45

LASTIKMAN
10:55 12:00 1:10 2:15 3:25 4:30 5:40 6:45 7:55 9:00

MANO PO 3
12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30

PANAGHOY SA SUBA
1:55 4:20 6:45 9:10

SIGAW
12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15

SO HAPPY TOGETHER
12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15

SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15

ALI MALL CINEMAS

3	Dolby	SIGAW	11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
4	SDDS	ENTENG KABISOTE	11:15 2:10 5:05 8:00
5	dts	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
6	Dolby	MANO PO 3	11:20 1:35 3:50 6:05 8:20
7	Dolby	PANAGHOY SA SUBA	10:20 12:45 3:10 5:35 8:00

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ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	SALAT SA LIGAYA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	AISHITE MASU (1941)
B	CLOSED
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA 1,2 3&4	NATIONAL TREASURE / BRIDGET JONES / SPIDERMAN 2 / SHREK 2
PREMIERE THEATRE	THE INCREDIBLES
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KALABIT
CINEMA-2	SALAT
CINEMA-3	ONE MISSED CALL
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	POLAR EXPRESS
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-6	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-7	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-8	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	HAROLD & KUMAR
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ALEXANDER
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	BAD SANTA
CINEMA-12	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-14	HONEY
CINEMA-15	B'CUZ OF U
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PIÑAS)	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-1	PASIYAM
CINEMA-2	BRIDGET JONES
CINEMA-4	POLAR EXPRESS
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
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GALLERIA 632-8115/16

1 MANO PO 3 • THX
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50
3 LASTIKMAN
11:50 2:25 4:55 7:25 9:50
4 SIGAW
11:40 2:10 4:40 7:10 9:40
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00
6 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
7 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00
8 AISHITE IMASU
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
9 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
12:50 3:00 5:10 7:20 9:30
10 MANO PO 3
11:30 2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ENTENG KABISOTE
11:15 1:50 4:25 7:00 9:40
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
3 AISHITE IMASU
10:10 12:15 2:15 4:20 6:25 8:50 10:00
4 LASTIKMAN
10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10:10 12:15 2:15 4:20 6:25 8:25 10:00
7 MANO PO 3
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 MANO PO 3
10:00 12:05 2:15 4:25 6:35 8:45 10:35
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:10 12:40 3:10 5:40 8:10 10:30
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
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4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
11:20 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00
5 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
10:35 1:00 3:25 5:50 8:15 10:30
6 LASTIKMAN
10:10 12:40 3:10 5:40 8:10 10:30
7 AISHITE IMASU
10:35 1:00 3:25 5:50 8:15 10:35
8 SIGAW
10:00 12:05 2:15 4:25 6:35 8:45 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 SIGAW
11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30
2 MANO PO 3
11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30
3 LASTIKMAN
10:15 12:45 3:15 5:45 8:25
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
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5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 8:55
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10:40 1:05 3:30 5:55 8:25
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:15 12:40 3:15 5:50 8:25
8 AISHITE IMASU
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:00

PIONEER 687-5378

1 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 SIGAW
4 MANO PO 3

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 LASTIKMAN

CAINTA 240-4661

1 MANO PO 3
2 SIGAW
3 LASTIKMAN
4 ENTENG KABISOTE

METRO MANILA *Film Festival Week*

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STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SIGAW
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 LASTIKMAN

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 SIGAW
4 AISHITE IMASU
5 LASTIKMAN

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 SIGAW
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MANO PO 3

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
6 LASTIKMAN

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 SIGAW
2 AISHITE IMASU
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENETNG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

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They took their final bow in 2004

SHOW STOPPER

LOS ANGELES—From the larger-than-life film stars of "The Godfather" and "Superman" to the musical "genius" who pioneered the sound of soul, some of the world's greatest entertainers took final bows during 2004.

Marlon Brando, the Oscar-winning rebel hailed as one of the most influential actors of his generation, and Christopher Reeve, the big-screen Man of Steel transformed by paralysis into a real-life hero to the disabled, joined composer-singer Ray Charles among the ranks of stars whose deaths dimmed the past year.

Others included knighted actor Sir Peter Ustinov, beloved children's entertainer Bob Keeshan (a.k.a. Captain Kangaroo) and two actresses famed for screams—"King Kong" heroine Fay Wray and "Psycho" co-star Janet Leigh.

Borscht belt veterans Alan King and Rodney Dangerfield both delivered their last punch lines, and onetime B-movie actor Ronald Reagan, who went on to ignite a Republican revolution as the 40th president of the United States, passed into history.

Following is a list of some of the better known show business figures who died during the past year, in order of their passing:

Ann Miller, 81. Dancer and comic actress who co-starred with such partners as Fred Astaire in "Easter Parade" and Gene Kelly in "On the Town." Jan. 22.

Bob Keeshan, 76. Original Clarabell the Clown of "The Howdy Doody Show," he went on to enchant millions of American youngsters as television's Captain Kangaroo. Jan. 23.

Paul Winfield, 62. Played slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. on television and earned an Oscar nomination for his role as a share-cropping father in "Sounder." March 7.

Sir Peter Ustinov, 82. Celebrated British actor, author, playwright and raconteur, he won Oscars for his roles in "Spartacus" and "Topkapi." March 28.

Alan King, 76. Acerbic comedian and actor hailed by some as the "Jewish Will Rogers." Among his favorite jokes: "What's the difference between a Rottweiler and a Jewish mother?

"Eventually the Rottweiler lets go." May 9.

June Taylor, 86. Choreographer for "The Jackie Gleason Show" who gave her name to the variety program's famed troupe of leggy dancers. May 16.

Tony Randall, 84. Emmy Award-winning actor best known for his comic role as the fastidious Felix Unger on TV's "The Odd Couple." May 17.

Ronald Reagan, 93. While his political achievements most stand out in history, he began as a radio announcer and actor who appeared in dozens of films, including a role as George "The Gipper" Gipp in the 1940 film "Knute Rockne, All American." June 5.

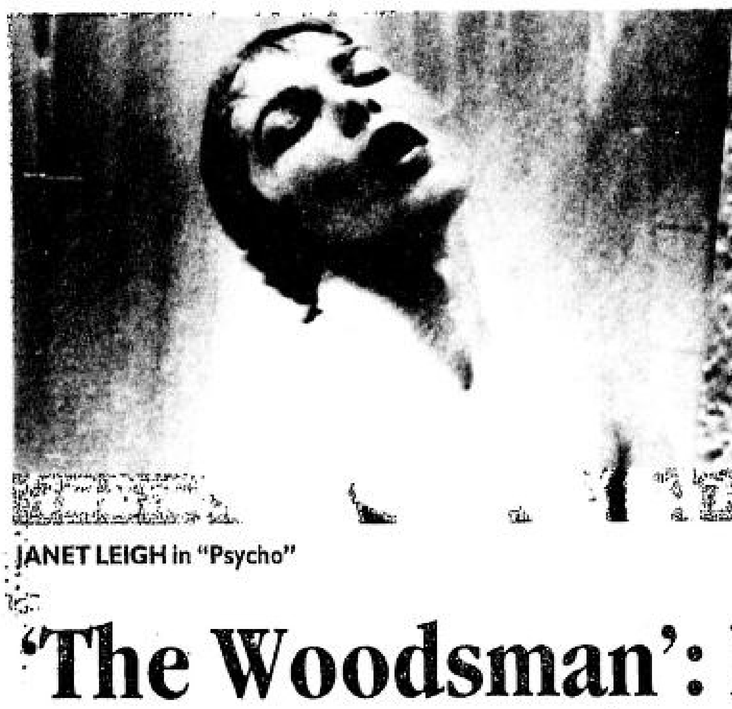
IN GLORIOUS BLACK & WHITE
Pat O'BRIEN
Ronald REAGAN
KNUTE ROCKNE - All American
MGM/UA

RONALD REAGAN with Pat O'Brien (right) in "Knute Rockne, All-American"

FAY WRAY in "King Kong"

SIR PETER USTINOV

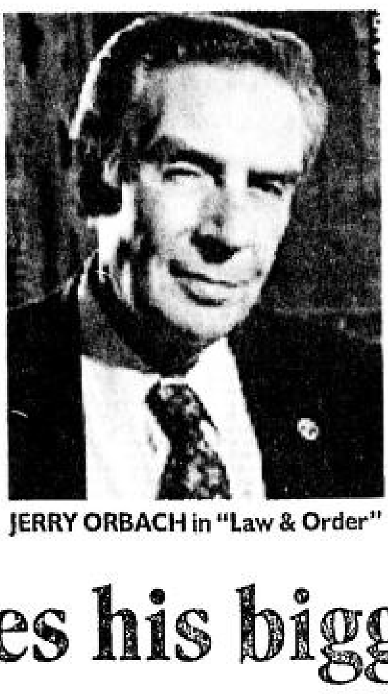
MARLON BRANDO in "The Godfather"



JANET LEIGH in "Psycho"

Cicely TYSON
Paul WINFIELD
Kevin HOOKS
Sounder

PAUL WINFIELD (right) in "Sounder"



JERRY ORBACH in "Law & Order"

Ray Charles, 73. Hailed as "the Genius" for such hits as "I Got a Woman" and "Georgia On My Mind," he overcame poverty, blindness and heroin addiction to lay the foundation of soul music. June 10.

Marlon Brando, 80. Oscar-winning star of "The Godfather"

and "On the Waterfront," his maverick, naturalistic style in "A Streetcar Named Desire" came to define a post-war American image of machismo and revolutionize acting. July 1.

Rick James, 56. Flamboyant funk music pioneer whose 1981 dance hit "Super Freak" came to embody the ruinous excesses of his colorful life. Aug. 6.

Fay Wray, 96. The shrieking blond beauty who gained fame as the frightened woman stalked up the Empire State Building by the giant ape King Kong. Aug. 8.

Julia Child, 91. The grande dame of TV cooking whose operatic voice and irreverent style brought French haute cuisine into America's humble kitchens. Aug. 13.

Johnny Ramone, 55. Born John Cummings, he was the guitarist for pioneering punk rock band the Ramones. Sept. 15.

Janet Leigh, 77. Starred opposite such leading men as Gary Cooper, Errol Flynn, James Stewart and ex-husband Tony Curtis, but perhaps her most memorable film moment was her shower stabbing scene in Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho." Oct. 3.

Rodney Dangerfield, 82. Bulgy-eyed comic famed for his self-deprecating one-liners and the signature phrase "I can't get no respect," he became a pop culture sensation in middle age with a string of broad film comedies. Oct. 5

Christopher Reeve, 52. "Superman" actor who became a leading advocate for spinal cord research after a riding accident left him paralyzed. Oct. 10.

Howard Keel, 85. A coal miner's son who starred in classic MGM musicals like "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers," he later revived his career on TV's "Dallas." Nov. 7

Ol' Dirty Bastard, 35. Born Russell Jones, his criminal lifestyle and erratic behavior overshadowed his work as a founding member of the rap collective Wu-Tang Clan. Nov. 13.

Jerry Orbach, 69. Onetime song-and-dance man who became a beloved co-star of the long-running "Law & Order" TV series, playing sardonic detective Lennie Briscoe. Dec. 28.

Reuters

'The Woodsman': Kevin Bacon takes his biggest risk yet

REVIEW

NEW YORK—Believe it or not, you will find yourself rooting for the redemption of Kevin Bacon's character in "The Woodsman"—a convicted child molester who just spent 12 years in prison.

That's a huge testament to the depth of Bacon's performance.

After playing the good-looking, all-American guy for so long in his younger days (in movies like "Diner" and "Footloose"), Bacon has grown into an actor who is willing to take risks ("Wild Things," "Hollow Man"). This is his biggest risk yet, but it pays off.

Hollow man

Bacon is absolutely haunting as Walter, a woodworker by trade trying to start over with a new job at a lumber yard and an old, rundown apartment. He drops his voice to its deepest register and delivers his lines in a defensive monotone. The sharp edges to his face, which have always made him look so strikingly handsome, help make him utterly convincing as a hollowed-out shell of a man.

Writer-director Nicole Kassell's filmmaking debut traverses incredibly painful territory, both in Walter's interior life and as he tries to function in the outside world, and some moments are nearly impossible to endure.

One in particular, involving a quiet, intelligent girl played by the confident Hannah Pilkes, is paced and performed exquisitely. Yet it's hard to watch without covering your eyes, because it's so suspenseful.

In another scene, Walter lurks behind a group of girls at the mall who are about 10 to 12 years old, the age of his earlier victims. It's one of a few plot contrivances in Kassell's script, such as, why is the only apartment Walter could find located across the street from an elementary school? And how is it possible that, right outside his window, another child molester (Kevin Rice) is preying on little boys, in plain view for Walter to see?

Claustrophobic

There's enough else about "The Woodsman," though, that makes it worthwhile, including his relationship with Vickie, a coworker played by Kyra Sedgwick, Bacon's real-life wife. Sedgwick provides much-needed warmth as the tough, slightly damaged woman who sees something inside him worth saving.

(And after the first time, you get over that uncomfortable sensation of watching an actual married couple having sex on screen.)

Mos Def brings surprising subtlety to his supporting role as police Sgt. Lucas, which could have been a gruff stereotype. He frequently checks up on Walter and antagonizes him, but there's something deep and pure about his intentions.

His presence is one of the many forces that create an inescapable feeling of claustrophobia. Walter's therapy sessions, which eventually break him down and force him to face the origin of his urges, also provide a sense of suffocation.

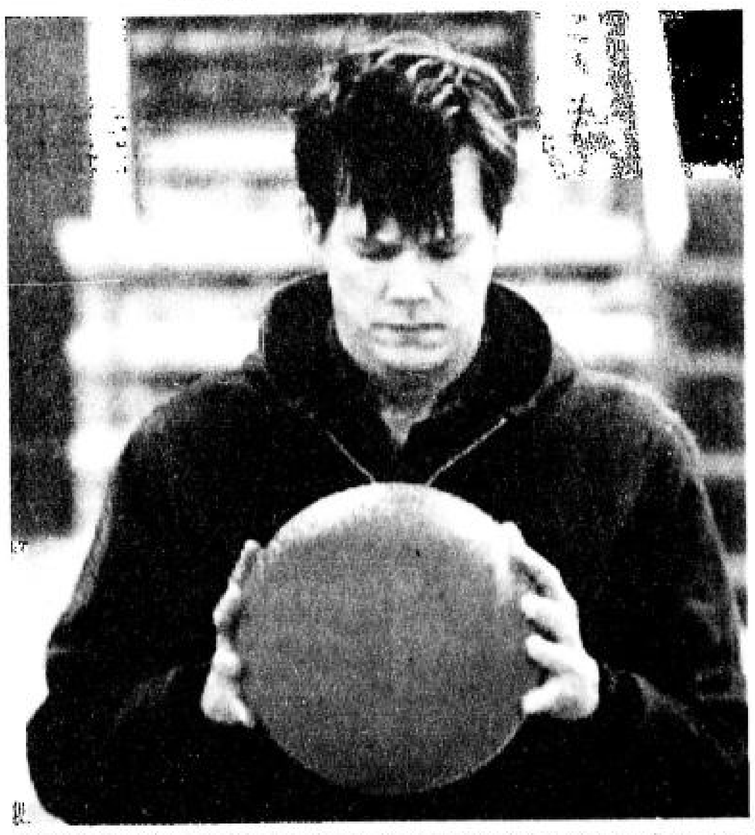
The use of faded colors in depicting the blue-collar setting further adds to the bleakness.

While in the end there is the possibility for hope, it's hard not to admire first-timer Kassell for her boldness in taking on such hopeless subject matter in the first place.

Bacon was a man haunted by ghostly visions in "Stir of Echoes" and an Alcatraz inmate driven violently mad by three years in solitary confinement in "Murder in the First," which drew him rave reviews.

He also was part of Clint Eastwood's terrific ensemble cast in 2003's "Mystic River," as a cop investigating the death of a childhood friend's daughter.

After "Footloose," Bacon shunned life as a romantic idol and turned down similar roles because he did not want to repeat himself. *AP*



KEVIN BACON: No longer playing the good-looking all-American guy.